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JOHN LAW

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BY

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"CONSTABLE OF THE TOWER," "LORD MAYOR OF LONDON,"

"CARDINAL POLE," ETC. ETC.

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JOHN LAW.

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PROLOGUE.—BEAU WILSON AND HIS WIFE.

I.

HOW THE LAIRD OF LAURISTON FIRST SET FOOT IN SAINT JAMES'S-STREET.

ABOUT noon on a charming day towards the latter end of May, 1705, a sedan-chair was set down opposite White's Coffee-house, in Saint James's-street.

There was nothing unusual in the circumstance. Two or three chairs, indeed, had just discharged their freight on the same spot without attracting the slightest attention; but the case was very different with the remarkably handsome man who emerged from the sedan in question, and stepped lightly upon the pavement.

On taking out his purse, this gallant-looking personage could find nothing in it but gold, and as the glittering pieces caught the eyes of the chairme , who were evidently from the Sister Isle, one of them said, in a coaxing tone, and touching his weatherbeate hat:

"Bless yer hon'r's handsome face, giv us one ov them yallow boys. Shure an it wouldn't become a fine jontleman like yerself to pay like common folk. 'Twould be a raal pleasure to Pat Molloy—that's my brother cheerman here—and to myself—Terry O'Flaherty," again touching his hat, "to carry yer hon'r for nothii g at all.

Nay, for the matter o' that, we'd readily giv a guinea, supposin' we had it, for the mere pride and delight ov bringin' yer hon'r here from the Hummums in Covent-garden—wouldn't we, Pat?"

"Troth, and that's true, Terry," replied the other. "By the powers! the jontleman's the noblest-lookin' fare as ever the pair ov us carried, and a guinea ought to pass on one side or the t'other to celebrate the event."

"Then I suppose it must pass on mine," said the gentleman, giving them the coveted coin. "You appear to have discovered that I am a stranger in London," he added, with a smile.

"Shure and yer hon'r doesn't say so?" exclaimed Terry, with affected astonishment. "Well, that bates everything. Is it a stranger ye are, sir? Only think of that, Pat! The jontleman's a foreigner, and us takin' him all the while for a born and bred Lunnoner."

"Bedad! I should never have guessed it," cried the other chairman. "To look at his hon'r's iligant manners and attire—and above all, to hear him spake—one would never take him for a Frenchman."

"Neither am I, friend," replied the gentleman. "I am a Scotsman, not a Frenchman, and am only just arrived from Edinburgh. I have never been in London before."

"Then you're heartily welcome to Town, sir," rejoined Terry; "and I only wish there wos more Scotchmen like you. But there's not many crosses the Tweed with a purse so well lined and a hand so liberal as yer hon'r's. If your countrymen has any money, they buttons up their pockets, and keeps it there. But we'll drink long life and prosperity to yer hon'r in a glass of usquebaugh afore we're an hour older."

"By the powers will we!" cried his comrade. "But we'd like to couple a name wid the toast. 'Twould make it sound all the heartier."

"'Tis a noble name his hon'r has got, I'll be sworn," cried Terry. "Maybe it's the great Duke of Argyle himself."

"You are wrong again, friend. I am a simple Scottish gentleman, without any pretension to title. In my own country I am known as Mr. Law of Lauriston."

"And a famous name it is," rejoined Terry. "I've often heerd ov it. Wasn't the furst Master Laa ov Larrystown a great laayer, yer hon'r?"

"The first laird of Lauriston, my father, was a goldsmith of Edinburgh," replied Law. "He purchased the estate, whence I derive my territorial designation, from the Dalgleish family, about twenty years ago. Now you know all about me—who I am, and what I am—and I trust your curiosity is fully satisfied."

"Lord love yer hon'r, it ain't curiosity, but interest," replied Terry, with his best bow; "and we're both fully sensible ov your hon'r's great condescension in takin' us into yer confidence. A purty name you've got, Mister Laa ov Larrystown, and well known 'twill be in the world one ov these days. You won't be offended wid me if I say you're born to good luck. I can read it in yer face. You'll win more riches than you'll ever spend, and gain higher places than you expect to reach."

"How do you know, rascal, what sums I hope to win, or what high places I expect to reach?" cried Law. "But you are more nearly right now than you were before. I am master of a scheme that will infallibly make me rich, and of necessity advance me to any high place I may aspire to."

"Didn't I say so?" cried Terry, delighted. "I'm a true prophet, if ever there wos one. I knew in a twinklin' that his hon'r wos a great schaymer."

"If the Scotch Parliament had adopted a plan I laid before it, I should have trebled the revenue of the country," observed Law.

"Wot thunderin' big blockheads the Scotch Parlimint must be not to adopt the plan," replied Terry, shrugging his shoulders with contempt. "But you'll find the English members more alive to their own interest. I only wish yer hon'r 'ud giv Pat and me the

chance ov treblin' our capital, and teach us how to turn one guinea into three."

"I could teach you how to make a hundred guineas out of one, and a thousand out of a hundred," remarked Law. "But that's a secret I keep to myself."

"No wonder," rejoined Terry, with a somewhat incredulous grin. "It ud nivir do to teach all the world how to grow rich. Bedad! yer hon'r must be a greater conjuror than one o' them greybeards as we see i' the print-shops, sittin' beside furnaces, peerin' into long-necked glass bottles, and changin' lead into gowld."

"No, friend," replied Law, laughing. "I don't pretend to transmute metals. In fact, I would dispense with gold altogether, and substitute paper-money."

"Dispense wi' gowld, and substitute paper!" exclaimed Terry, with a comical grimace. "Then I fear yer hon'r's plan won't suit us any more than the Scotch Parlimint. Fairy money, they say in Ireland, turns into dry leaves, and lest this guinea should turn into paper, we'll be off to the Blue Posts round the corner, and spend it."

"A very sensible resolution," observed Law. "But one of these days you'll call to mind what I've said to you."

"Divil doubt it!" replied Terry. "Many's the time we'll think ov yer hon'r. And if ever you want a sedan-cheer, Terry O'Flaherty and Pat Molloy is the boys as 'll carry you to the world's end and back again. So come along, Pat. We're only takin' up his hon'r's precious time."

With this, they both shouldered their straps, caught hold of the poles, and trotted jauntily off with the chair.

This discourse was not lost upon a group of loungers collected near the steps of White's Coffee-house, and possibly Mr. Law might have intended some of his remarks for their benefit.

All these personages were young beaux, noticeable for gay velvet coats of various hues bedizened with lace, and powdered perukes of the latest fashion, and

being leaders of ton, and lawgivers in regard to dress, they felt themselves called upon to criticise the stranger's deportment and attire. Not that either was open to censure, for Mr. Law's habiliments were rich and elegant, and of the newest mode—being, in fact, fabricated in town—while his manner was singularly graceful; but these foppish censors were resolved to find fault.

Accordingly, the Hon. Charlie Carrington declared that the handsome laird's blue velvet coat, laced with silver, was ill made, though it fitted to perfection, and was manufactured by Charlie's town tailor, Rivers. Sir Harry Archer ridiculed Law's peruke as exaggerated and badly powdered, though it was fresh from the hands of the court perruquier, Houblon. Dick Bodville said the Scot's figure was too slight, though he could not deny its symmetry. Tom Bagot thought Mr. Law too tall, and Jerry Ratcliffe not tall enough. Bob Foley, who was as stiff as a poker, pronounced him awkward and boorish, though he was contradicted by Law's every movement; and drawling Joe Lovel said the fellow had a strong Scotch accent, though it was nothing more than a very agreeable Doric.

Envy all. Not one of the sneering coxcombs but secretly acknowledged that the laird of Lauriston was one of the handsomest and most distinguished-looking men that ever trod the pavement of Saint James's-street. But let us see what he was really like.

John Law then was just thirty-four, but he looked almost ten years younger. His personal advantages were remarkable; figure tall and commanding, slight, but admirably proportioned; features classical and regular in outline; eyes large, azure in colour, and somewhat prominent; complexion delicate as a woman's. Yet, with all this apparent effeminacy, a very manly spirit dwelt in his breast. John Law was remarkably active, excelled at tennis, rode boldly and well, was an ardent sportsman, expert in the use of pistol and small-sword, and his courage had already been proved in more than one encounter.

Though no shallow fop, who thought only of decorating his handsome person, John Law did not disdain the aid of dress, but, as we have seen, set himself off to the best advantage, just as he sought to improve his great natural endowments by study and art. In his manner there was perhaps a little—very little—haughtiness, but it was totally devoid of insolence and assumption, and the pride he manifested seemed almost inseparable from the consciousness he could not fail to possess of great mental powers and personal advantages. When he was resolved to please, his manner was so fascinating that he was quite irresistible.

Whether that smooth and serene brow could ever be darkened by frowns, that soft and suave expression be obliterated by angry passions, those eyes of summer blue and almost dove-like tenderness emit terrible and scathing glances,—whether any such changes as these could be wrought, will be seen as we proceed with our history.

At present we have only to exhibit the gallant laird of Lauriston as he was at this particular juncture, brilliant in exterior, captivating in manner, disposed to enjoy himself, and having ample means of doing so; with a head full of schemes, and a heart full of ambition, resolved, like a desperate gambler, to throw for the largest stake in the game of life, win it, or beggar himself in the attempt.

On the death of his father, William Law, goldsmith and banker, Edinburgh (goldsmiths were bankers in those days), which occurred several years previously, John Law came into possession of a considerable fortune, including the lands of Lauriston—an extensive property situated on the south shore of the Firth of Forth. Hence it being wholly unnecessary for him to follow any occupation, he led the life of a young man of fashion, dressed gaily, choosing idle and extravagant associates, who led him into all sorts of follies, and losing a great deal of money at play. At this period, from his somewhat effeminate appearance and manner,

he was known amongst his intimates as Jessamy John, while those less familiarly acquainted with him were wont to call him Beau Law. After leading this dissipated life for a few years, the young spendthrift found it necessary to retrench, and committing the management of his property to an excellent mother, who, luckily for him, was still living, he passed over into Holland, and engaged himself as secretary to a Scotch mercantile house in Amsterdam. His object in doing so was to study the operations of the great Dutch Bank, for he had now made up his mind to abandon his former frivolous pursuits, and become a man of business. At an earlier period he had sedulously devoted himself to the study of arithmetic and geometry, and had mastered the science of algebra, and he now laboured hard to acquire a perfect knowledge of political economy, and having a great taste for the subject, as well as extraordinary capacity, he speedily succeeded in his aim. He remained in Amsterdam for three years, and on his return to Edinburgh, being now a proficient in all financial matters, he voluntarily devoted himself to the arrangement of the Scotch revenue accounts, and rendered important service to the commissioners. Having thus introduced himself to public notice under a new and more promising aspect, he sought to establish his reputation by publishing a pamphlet, entitled "Proposals and Reasons for constituting a Council of Trade," wherein he brought forward an able and elaborate plan for reviving the trade and manufactures of Scotland, which at that time were greatly depressed; but though the scheme did not meet with the encouragement it deserved, it had the effect of introducing him to some of the most eminent men of the country, and amongst others to the Duke of Argyle, his sons the Marquis of Lorn and Lord Archibald Campbell, and the Marquis of Tweeddale. Subsequently, he published another work, containing a proposal for supplying the nation with money, and followed it up by laying before the Scottish Parliament

a plan for removing the difficulties under which the kingdom laboured from the great scarcity of specie, suggesting for this purpose the establishment of a National Bank on a new plan.

But this second plan, though supported by the court party and the Squadrone, was likewise rejected. Finding that nothing could be done in Scotland, Law began to turn his attention to the Continent, where he felt sure his plans would be adopted by some needy state, which they must speedily enrich. Before going abroad, however, he resolved to communicate them to the English government, and with this design set out for London.

Up to the time of leaving Edinburgh, Law had been in the utmost request in society; and as he had a very large acquaintance, general regret was expressed at his departure—the more so, as he held out no hopes of a speedy return, but expressed an intention of passing several years abroad. When he quitted Edinburgh, it was felt that he had left a blank behind him, which could not readily be filled up. The northern metropolis had lost the first of its beaux and its choicest spirit—many pleasant circles missed their chief attraction—and many a bonny damsel sighed to think that the handsome laird of Lauriston was gone, having taken her heart with him.

Efforts had certainly been made to detain him, especially by some of the syrens just alluded to, but Law was proof against them all. Ambition was the dominant passion in his breast, and ambition pointed out that Edinburgh was too circumscribed a stage for the full display of his powers, so he resolved to transfer himself to London, and, if he failed there, to pass over to the Continent, where he felt assured of success. So he bade a tender adieu to many weeping fair ones, who vowed they should continue inconsolable, but who, nevertheless, were easily consoled, shook hands with his companions, and stepping into his berlin, posted up to London as fast as four horses could carry him, ar-

riving, without any hindrance from highwaymen, on the fourth evening, when he alighted at the Hummums, in Covent-garden. His first visit, next morning, was to White's Coffee-house, which had been established about six or seven years previously, and was then in great vogue, and where he expected to meet some persons to whom he had letters of introduction.

As he was about to enter the coffee-house, Law bowed to the group of young coxcombs stationed at the door, but his salutation was very slightly and coldly returned by them. Nevertheless, he paused, and with great politeness of manner inquired whether any of the gentlemen could inform him if Mr. Angus Wilson was in the house.

"The waiter will inform you, sir, if you will take the trouble to enter," rejoined the individual nearest him.

Quite unconcerned at the dry and repelling tone of this answer, Mr. Law said, "May I venture to inquire whom I have the honour of addressing?"

The young coxcomb looked at him impertinently for a moment, as if considering what reply he should make. At last he said, "You are a stranger, sir, and, as such, unacquainted with the usages of society, which forbid a gentleman to address another without a formal introduction. I am therefore willing to excuse the irregularity, and beg to inform you that I am Sir Harry Archer."

"Faith, I'm delighted to hear it," replied Law. "Then I hope Sir Harry Archer will allow me the pleasure of shaking hands with him."

"Sir!" exclaimed Archer, drawing back, "you presume——"

"At least, allow me to give you this letter of introduction from the Marquis of Lorn," said Law, presenting a note to him.

"A letter from the Marquis of Lorn!" exclaimed Sir Harry, opening it, and hastily glancing at its contents. "Ah! my dear Mr. Law, I'm enchanted to make your acquaintance. Lorn speaks of you in the highest terms—the very highest terms—and begs me to intro-

duce you to all my friends, which I shall not fail to do, and I will commence with those present. Gentlemen," he added to the others, "let me make Mr. Law of Lauriston known to you — a most accomplished gentleman—tres répandu among the Edinburgh beau monde —and who cannot fail to prove a most agreeable acquisition to our own society."

Bows were then made by the whole party, who professed themselves charmed to know any friend of the Marquis of Lorn.

"We could not help overhearing what passed between you and your chairmen, Mr. Law," observed Sir Harry, laughing, "so we are to a certain extent acquainted with your history."

"Oh! I was merely diverting myself with them," replied Law. "I have heard that your London chairmen are odd characters, and wished to see what they are really like."

"You got hold of two good specimens of the class," observed Sir Harry. "Most of them are Irishmen, and are free and easy enough, as you have just discovered. They take us everywhere, and consequently become spies upon all our actions; but I must do them the justice to say that they rarely blab. But let us go in. We can continue our conversation as we sip our chocolate. Have you breakfasted, Mr. Law?"

"More than three hours ago," replied the other. "But I am quite equal to a cup of chocolate. I am an early riser, Sir Harry."

"Ah! that shows you keep good hours. But before you have been a month in Town you will lie in bed late. What with the playhouses, the opera, ridottos, masquerades, Ranelagh, and Vauxhall, petits soupers, and other amusements, we are obliged to sleep off our fatigues, and are fit for nothing before noon. We are wonderfully early this morning, considering we were all at a masquerade last night."

"'Tis a pity you were not there, Mr. Law," observed the Honourable Charlie Carrington. "It was vastly amusing. There were plenty of charming masks."

"Charlie would have you believe that half a dozen of them showed him their faces," remarked Bob Foley. "But that won't pass with us. We know better."

"One person discovered herself to me," rejoined Charlie, "and that was enough, for she had the loveliest face in the room."

"How can you tell that, since you beheld none of the others?" said Dick Bodville.

"Because she is allowed by all of you to be the Queen of Beauty," said Carrington.

"Then I know whom you mean," drawled Joe Lovel.

"Guess as you please, I shan't enlighten you further," rejoined Carrington.

"Poh! You have said enough to give us to understand that you allude to the beautiful Belinda," observed Sir Harry.

"Think so, and welcome. I say nothing," replied Carrington.

"May I, without indiscretion, inquire who the beautiful Belinda is?" asked Law.

"She is the finest woman in Town, and the universal toast among the young men of fashion, all of whom are dying for her," returned Sir Harry. "That is all I dare tell you about her. But don't believe a word that Charlie Carrington has just said. Belinda would never unmask to *him*."

"But I maintain she did," rejoined Carrington, "and gave me a full view of her lovely features."

"Ha! ha! ha! you have betrayed yourself," cried Sir Harry, laughing. "Well, if Belinda did permit you a glimpse of her countenance, it was not so much to gratify you as to plague her jealous spouse, for I'll be sworn he was watching her."

"Now I think on it, there was an Othello not far from us at the moment," said Carrington. "It might have been the tiresome old dotard."

"'Twas he, rely on't; and he is like enough to run you through the body for daring to breathe a word of love to his fickle Desdemona."

"I desire nothing better than to cross swords with

him," said Carrington. "I'll kill him, and marry his widow."

"So the fair Belinda is married, I find?" said Law.

"Unhappily for herself — happily for us," rejoined Sir Harry. "She is a most exquisite creature—as you will own, for you are sure to know her—who is united to a man thrice her own age, and who is horribly jealous of her. But you shall know more anon. Let us to breakfast."

Upon this, they entered the coffee-house.

The principal room on the ground floor was full, and a great deal of conversation was going on amongst the company. Most of the guests were fashionably dressed young men, like those Law had first encountered, who were seated at different little tables, taking coffee or chocolate, reading the newspapers, discussing the politics of the hour, singing the praises of Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Bracegirdle, settling a cock-fight, or betting upon a race about to come off at Newmarket. The laird of Lauriston attracted considerable attention as he entered the room; but it was soon known who he was, for Sir Harry introduced him to several of the company.

A large table placed in a bow-window overlooking the street was reserved for the party with whom Law had become associated, and as soon as they were seated, their cups were filled by the officious waiters with frothing and delicious chocolate.

While the chocolate was being served, Sir Harry inquired of one of the waiters whether Mr. Angus Wilson had been there that morning, and, on receiving an answer in the negative, he remarked to Law, who was sitting next him:

"I scarcely thought he would show himself so early, as he was at the masquerade last night. By-the-by, Mr. Law," he added, with a smile, "are you personally acquainted with Mr. Wilson?"

"I am not, Sir Harry," replied Law, "but the Duke of Argyle has favoured me with a letter to him."

"You could not possibly have a better introduc-

tion, for Mrs. Wilson was a Campbell. But since you don't know him, I may as well tell you his history. Five-and-thirty years ago, Angus Wilson was a page to his Majesty King Charles the Second, and was then a sufficiently beau garçon to be much admired by the ladies of that pleasant court. On the death of the merry monarch, Angus enjoyed the favour of his successor, and became so much the fashion, that he acquired the title of Beau Wilson, a designation which he still retains. He served in Ireland with distinction under James the Second, and fought at the battle of the Boyne, where he was wounded in the hip, and, after his sovereign's disastrous defeat, accompanied him to St. Germain. It was only on Queen Anne's accession to the throne that Mr. Wilson made his peace with the powers that be, and returned to England."

"Then I presume that he still remains attached to the cause of the Stuarts?" observed Law.

"It is so understood," replied Sir Harry. "However, the old beau doesn't trouble himself much with political intrigues and state plots now, having quite enough to do to manage his own affairs. Last spring the belle of the season, who turned all heads and captivated all hearts, was the lovely daughter of Colonel Grant Campbell; and you will scarce credit that such a charming person should be induced to give her hand to Mr. Wilson."

"He must be a bold man to venture upon the step," observed Law, laughing.

"No one would have thought him capable of such folly," said Sir Harry, "for he is a thorough man of the world, and fully alive to the risk he ran, but he was completely infatuated by the charms of la belle Campbell. She had plenty of admirers, but none who suited her so well as the wealthy old beau, so she accepted him. However, she has not found him quite so tractable as she expected. He is desperately jealous and suspicious, so that she can scarcely lead a happy life."

"You can't conceive, Mr. Law, two greater con-

trasts than this ill-assorted pair afford," remarked Charlie Carrington. "She, scarce twenty, and witching as Venus—he, old, ugly, and limping, like Vulcan, from the effects of the wound in the hip which he got at the battle of the Boyne. She, captivating in manner and smiling on all—he, sour and sarcastic, and jealous as the devil."

"No wonder, with such a wife," said Sir Harry. "You would be just as jealous of her yourself, if she were Mrs. Carrington. But you don't do quite justice to Beau Wilson. He is neither so very old nor so very ugly as you represent him. He is certainly lame, and rather high-shouldered, but he has very polished manners, and is a high-bred gentleman, though of the old school."

"Of the school of our grandsires," rejoined Carrington.

"Well, our grandsires were just as fine fellows in their day as we are in ours," retorted Archer. "You don't imagine the gallants of Charles the Second's time were inferior to the wits and beaux of Queen Anne's day. Angus Wilson, I maintain, is a refined gentleman, and Mr. Law, I am quite sure, will be of my opinion when he sees him—provided he doesn't make the old beau jealous."

"I now know who were the Othello and Desdemona of last night's masquerade," remarked Law.

"Don't fall in love with Belinda, and you will have a fast friend in her husband," observed Sir Harry. "From what you let fall just now, Mr. Law, I fancy you have some project which you desire to bring forward?"

"I have an important financial scheme, which I mean to lay before Lord Godolphin," replied Law; "and I fancy Mr. Wilson can obtain me an interview with his lordship, or with the chief secretary of state, Lord Sunderland."

"Not a doubt of it," replied Sir Harry. "Beau Wilson stands so well with the Duchess of Marlborough, that through her grace he can readily procure you access to the Queen or her ministers."

"So the Duke of Argyle informed me," said Law. "If I can only get the Duchess of Marlborough to take up my scheme, it will infallibly be adopted."

"Well, we are all to have a share in it, that is understood," said Sir Harry, laughing.

"Quite so," rejoined Law, seriously; "and I engage that the shares will be eagerly sought, and rise so rapidly, and to such a height, that if you buy a thousand pounds' worth you shall win ten thousand in less than a month."

This assertion elicited exclamations of astonishment from all the party, and Sir Harry shouted out,

"Bravissimo! That's the scheme for my money. I shall go for a thousand shares."

"And I for ten thousand, if I can get that amount of shares," said Charlie Carrington. "I can borrow the money for a month."

"We'll all go in for ten thousand!" cried the others. "Make a fortune while we are about it. Success to your scheme, Mr. Law!"

"I hope you'll bring it forward without delay, Mr Law," said Jerry Ratcliffe. "Thirty thousand would set me up."

"It depends upon her Majesty's ministers, not upon me," replied Law. "If Lord Godolphin entertains the project, the thing is done."

"And our fortune made," added Sir Harry. "All the influence we possess shall be brought to bear upon the project, and I think we *can* do something with Godolphin and Sunderland—eh, gentlemen?"

"We'll try, at all events," rejoined the others.

II.

HOW MR. LAW PLAYED AT BASSET, AND BROKE THE BANK.

SHORTLY afterwards, the whole party adjourned to an inner room, where play was going on.

Like the principal coffee-room, this *salon de jeu* was full of company. In the centre of the apartment was a tapis vert, at which a tailleur presided, and round it several young men of fashion were seated, playing basset A good deal of interest was excited in the game, as considerable sums were staked by the punters, whose purses were speedily emptied. Others, however, just as eager to risk their money, took their places, so the game went merrily on, with pretty nearly the same result to those engaged in it.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Law?" said Sir Harry.

"Presently," replied the other. "I want the bank to grow rich before I assail it. I will show our friends how to play basset, and give those fellows," glancing at the tailleur and croupier, "a lesson."

"I am glad to find you so confident, Mr. Law," said Archer. "When I first handled a card and rattled a dice-box, I made sure of winning, but I'm not so sanguine now."

"Success in play may be rendered matter of certainty by calculation," rejoined Law. "I once played badly myself, but I don't do so now. Will you go halves in my winnings or losses, Sir Harry?"

"With pleasure," replied the other. "If I have not entire faith in your skill, I have a strong conviction that fortune will favour you. Therefore, play for us both, and stake what you please."

"Don't be uneasy," said Law. "You won't regret the partnership."

At this juncture, Charlie Carrington, who had sa down at the tapis vert, got up, railing loudly at his

luck, and Law instantly took his place. Sir Harry drew near to watch the Scotsman's play, and, surprised at the indifference he exhibited, began to think he had not made a very prudent arrangement. However, he soon altered his opinion, for though Law appeared as unconcerned as ever, and even continued to chat gaily, he went on without a single reverse from his *couche* of twenty guineas to *trente et le va.*

When this large stake was won, Sir Harry could not contain his excitement, but Law remained wholly unmoved, and, though the company began now to crowd round him, and every eye was bent upon him, he appeared less interested than any one present in the issue of the game, making it evident that he not only possessed great skill, but extraordinary coolness.

"Are you going on?" whispered Sir Harry.

"To be sure," replied Law, with a smile. "I have done nothing yet."

"Nothing!" exclaimed Sir Harry. "The deuce you haven't! Why, you have won six hundred guineas. I shall be quite content with my share of it."

"I'll stop, if you desire it," replied Law, without manifesting any emotion; "but it is a pity not to follow it up. You may as well have six hundred as three."

"Well, do just as you please," rejoined Sir Harry. "What a devil of a fellow he is!" he added to Carrington. "He plays just as coolly as if he were staking a few crowns. Why, the very tailleur can scarcely deal the cards. Look how his hand shakes."

"He knows he's doomed," laughed Law.

"By Heaven! there never was such luck!" cried Carrington.

"It's not luck, but good play," said Law. "I told you I should win. I always do win."

"The deuce you do!" said Carrington. "I wish you'd give me a lesson. It's just the contrary with me. I always lose."

"I am giving you a lesson now, if you can profit by

it," replied Law. "*Soixante et le va*," he called out to the tailleur.

This challenge, which, notwithstanding the high play that went on there, had rarely been uttered in that room, caused general excitement both among the lookers-on and the punters, and the tailleur was perceptibly agitated. He called out in a tremulous voice, "Ace wins, five loses, knave wins, seven loses, ten wins——"

"Then we win—that is, Mr. Law wins!" cried Sir Harry, unable to contain himself.

"Not yet, Sir Harry," observed Law, quietly. "The cards must be dealt a second time. But we *shall* win."

And so they did. After much shuffling of the cards, and agonising slowness in dealing them, the pallid tailleur faltered out "Ten wins," and then sank back in his chair with a groan.

On this declaration Law arose, with a slight smile of triumph on his countenance, to receive the congratulations of his new friends, all of whom pressed eagerly round him. Sir Harry shook him cordially by the hand, and said,

"On my soul, Mr. Law, I want words to thank you. You've made me above six hundred pounds richer than I was when I entered this room, and my gratitude ought to be proportionate to the obligation. Command me in any way you please. I am yours for ever."

"Don't say a word more, Sir Harry," rejoined Law. "I am happy in being able to convince you, and the gentlemen to whom you have made me known, that you may confide in me."

"I will embark my whole fortune in any scheme you may propose," said Sir Harry. "And I think you may count upon my friends."

"Mr. Law may count upon me," cried Charlie Carrington.

"And upon all of us," chorused the others.

Of course there was no more play, the bank being broken, and indeed it could not quite meet Law's de-

mands upon it. Mr. White, the keeper of the coffee-house, was then summoned by Sir Harry, and the money deposited with him.

III.

OF THE QUARREL BETWEEN BEAU WILSON AND CHARLIE CARRINGTON.

"Is not that Beau Wilson?" inquired Law, calling Sir Harry's attention to an old gentleman, richly clad, and of very courtly appearance, who had just entered the room.

"Yes, that's old Angus, sure enough," replied Sir Harry. "But how the deuce did you recognise him?"

"Merely from your accurate description," replied Law, with a smile. "But do me the favour to present me to him."

"With the greatest pleasure," replied Sir Harry. "Come along."

Divining their object, Mr. Wilson advanced to meet them, and his lameness was then very evident. Unquestionably, the old gentleman merited the designation he had gained, for his attire was of the gayest, and hardly in accordance with his years. He was dressed in a flowered velvet coat embroidered with gold, and cut in the last fashion, while his waistcoat was of rich silk sprigged with gold, and his long ruffles of the finest Brussels lace. Pearl-coloured silk hose, rolled above the knee, cased his shrunken though still shapely legs, and a well-powdered peruke flowed over his rounded shoulders. His lameness rendering support indispensable, he carried a crutch-handled cane.

Though long past his meridian, and derided as an antiquated beau by the fops of the day, Angus Wilson was in very good preservation, and, judging from ap-

pearances, likely to last for several years to come. Years ago, when page to Charles the Second, and in the bloom of youth, he was no doubt handsome, but little remained of his former good looks. His nose was aquiline, his brows black and bushy, and his eyes surprisingly quick and penetrating. Moreover, his teeth, which he took care to display, were still white and even. His scrupulously shaved cheeks and chin looked perfectly blue. The hand of time had somewhat reduced his stature by embowing his shoulders, but even now that he was thus robbed of a few inches, he was scarcely below the middle height.

When Law was presented to him by Sir Harry, the old beau manifested great pleasure at the introduction, and after the first civilities had passed, said with great earnestness, "I shall be delighted to see you at my house in Berkeley-square, Mr. Law, whenever you will honour me with a visit. His Grace the Duke of Argyle and the Marquis of Tweeddale have both acquainted me by letter with your intention of passing a few months in Town, and I need not say that I will do my best to make your time pass agreeably. They both allude to your plan of a National Bank—of which I had heard, of course—eulogise the scheme, and reprobate its rejection by the Scotch Parliament. They also advert to some other project which you have in petto, but we will speak of this at a more convenient opportunity. Something may be done with her Majesty's ministers. I flatter myself that I have some little interest, and all I have shall be exerted in your behalf."

Law was expressing his warmest acknowledgments, when Mr. Wilson interrupted him by saying, "Enough, my good sir. Thank me when I have served you. So you have signalised your entrance into Town life by a coup de maître—have broken the bank, eh? Be ruled by me, and stop with your first success. Basset is a ruinous game, as several of the gentlemen here present can testify. 'Tis a modification of the old Royal Oak Lottery, which decoyed so many pigeons to the net in

the days of my royal master, Charles the Second. For my own part, I have long forsworn play, and never now touch cards or dice."

"Because you have lost the capacity for enjoyment, that is no reason why you should debar us from it, who are in the heyday of youth," observed Charlie Carrington, impertinently. "The passion for play, like all other passions, except that of avarice, dies out with age. In thirty or forty years' time Mr. Law will give up basset and hazard, or basset and hazard will give up him. He may, perhaps, console himself for the deprivation by a young wife."

"I trust I may be so fortunate," remarked Law, noticing with some uneasiness the cloud gathering on the old beau's countenance.

"There are some people upon whom all counsel is thrown away," remarked Wilson, glancing contemptuously at Carrington; "but I do not concern myself with such fools, save to chastise them if they trouble me."

"Then it is for that purpose you carry a cane, and not from lameness, as we have hitherto supposed?" observed the young man, with a sneer.

"I carry a sword as well as a cane, sir," retorted Wilson, sternly.

"Pshaw! you are too old to use a sword—better keep to the stick," said Carrington, in a taunting tone. "You must have slept ill after the masquerade last night, and have got up in a bad humour. No matrimonial altercation occurred, I trust, at breakfast? I should really be concerned if I have unwittingly been the cause of any misunderstanding between so amiable a couple."

"Hold your peace, sir, or by Heaven! I will strike you to the earth," cried Wilson, goaded to fury, and raising his cane.

He might have carried out the threat if his arm had not been seized by Law, while Sir Harry and Bagot threw themselves between him and the object of his wrath.

"No necessity to make a disturbance here, Mr. Wilson," observed Carrington, coolly. "If this is not a

mere ebullition of temper, likely to subside as quickly as it rose, and you are really desirous of a hostile meeting with me, it can be arranged without more ado."

"Be it so," replied Wilson. "Your impertinence shall not pass unpunished. Mr. Law," he added, turning to him, "you are almost a stranger to me, but I know you to be a man of honour. Allow me to claim your services in this affair."

"I cannot refuse the request, sir," replied Law. "Indeed, I most readily accede to it, in the hope of effecting a reconciliation——"

"Reconciliation is impossible, Mr. Law," rejoined Wilson, peremptorily. "I will accept no apology. The meeting must take place."

"Of course it must," rejoined Carrington. "I promise myself the pleasure of cutting Mr. Wilson's throat. Sir Harry, I know I may count upon your friendship. All I ask is, that the meeting be not delayed beyond to-morrow morning."

"I am as impatient as yourself, sir," said Wilson, "and shall breakfast better after an airing in Hyde Park."

"You will never eat another breakfast, if my hand does not fail me," said Carrington. "Pray recommend Mrs. Wilson not to wait for you—or I will call upon her after the meeting."

The old beau did not deign to notice the impertinence.

"Do me the favour to let me know what arrangements you make for me, Mr. Law," he said. "You will find me on the promenade near the basin of water in Hyde Park an hour hence. I will remain there till you come."

"A word before you go, Mr. Wilson," said Carrington. "If you have not made your will, I counsel you to do so without delay, and leave all your property to your wife."

"A truce to this ill-timed jesting, Charlie," observed Sir Harry.

"Let the puppy snarl on," said Wilson. "I will silence him effectually anon." And bowing formally to the company, he limped out of the room.

"By my faith I was not jesting, Sir Harry," said Car-

rington, as soon as Wilson was gone. "I have a prodigious interest in the old beau's will, since I mean to make Mrs. Wilson a widow, and out of gratitude she must needs bestow her hand upon me. Au revoir, messieurs." And he too made his bow and departed.

It was then settled between Sir Harry and Mr. Law that the meeting should take place in a retired part of Hyde Park at nine next morning; but Law being entirely unacquainted with the locality, Sir Harry proposed that they should drive to the Park forthwith and select the ground.

Accordingly, they called a coach, and proceeded in it to Hyde Park Corner, where they alighted, and passing through the gates, shaped their course across the turf till they came to a group of trees, near which was a clear piece of ground, very well adapted to their purpose.

"This spot will suit us exactly, Mr. Law," observed Sir Harry, after they had examined it. "Make these trees your mark, and you cannot miss it. Notwithstanding my principal's bloodthirsty intentions, I trust the affair may not have a fatal termination. Indeed, I am by no means sure that Carrington will have the best of it. The old beau is a very skilful swordsman, and just as cool and collected as Charlie is rash and hot-headed."

"As far as I can judge, I think the chances are in Mr. Wilson's favour," said Law. "In addition to the skill which you say he possesses, he has certainly the quicker eye of the two, a steady hand, and strong wrist. The old man is full of vigour, with muscles like iron. Depend upon it he will prove no despicable antagonist. Besides, he has an affront to avenge, so Mr. Carrington had better look to himself."

IV.

BELINDA AND LADY KATE.

THEY then turned to other topics, and continued chatting together till they reached the "Ring," as the drive round the sheet of water on the Kensington side of Hyde Park was even then denominated. Of course at the date of our story there were neither the numerous brilliant equipages nor the throng of gay equestrians of both sexes to be seen as now-a-days in the same region; but still the "Ring" was the most fashionable drive in Town, and every grand gilt coach found its way thither. Moreover, there was a very agreeable promenade by the side of the water, and on fine days the fair occupants of the carriages usually got out to take an hour's exercise there, and at the same time display their finery and personal charms.

At the hour when Law and Sir Harry approached the "Ring," the road was full of coaches, many of which were as richly gilt and as magnificently appointed as my Lord Mayor's state coach, and would put to shame our plain modern vehicles. The coachmen and footmen appertaining to these gorgeous carriages were as fine as gold lace, silk, powder, and costly liveries could make them. Among the long line of superb equipages drawn up near the basin, Law noticed one richer than all the rest, and to which six splendid horses were attached, and learnt to his surprise that it belonged to Mrs. Wilson.

"No duchess has so handsome a coach as Belinda," observed Sir Harry, with a smile, "and very few have richer jewels. She has only to ask and have. Old Angus can refuse her nothing, and would ruin himself to gratify her slightest whim. But she must be on the promenade; so you will see her, and judge whether we have overrated her personal attractions."

Forcing their way through a phalanx of gorgeously arrayed footmen, who appeared to guard the promenade

from vulgar intruders, they joined the gay throng sauntering along the margin of the water. Sir Harry met numerous acquaintances, and pointed out several beauties and distinguished personages to his companion. Law, from his handsome exterior, gallant bearing, and gay attire, attracted general attention, and frequent inquiries as to who he was were addressed to Sir Harry. Owing to repeated stoppages they moved on somewhat slowly, and had scarcely proceeded a hundred yards, when Law descried Beau Wilson coming towards them from the opposite direction. The old gentleman was limping along between two ladies, both of whom were young, exquisitely attired, and surpassingly beautiful. Both, indeed, were so beautiful, that Law, fairly perplexed, and unable to guess which was Belinda, applied for information on the point to Sir Harry.

"The lady on the old beau's left is his wife," replied Archer. "The other is Belinda's cousin, Lady Kate Knollys, whom some people think quite as charming as Mrs. Wilson herself—but I am not of that opinion. Lady Kate is a widow—so you may have a chance with her, Mr. Law, if you are so minded. She is the third daughter of the Earl of Banbury, and married a Mr. Senor, whom nobody knew anything about, save that he was rich—but he very considerately died within a year of their marriage."

"She is certainly very handsome," observed Law, "as indeed is Mrs. Wilson. On my soul, I can scarcely tell which I admire most."

"You will be better able to decide anon," rejoined Sir Harry, with a laugh.

Both ladies, as we have just said, were beauties, but in totally different styles; Belinda being a brunette with large black eyes, jetty brows, and a rich glowing dark complexion, ruby lips, and pearly teeth. Her raven tresses were magnificent, but spoiled by powder. The powder, however, gave piquancy and effect to her dark eyes, brows, and warm complexion. Lady Kate's charms were of another order. Eyes of tender blue, delicately

fair skin, pencilled eyebrows describing a perfect arch, a forehead white as Parian marble, a cheek that dimpled when she smiled, and light locks, formed part of her attractions; but she had many others that we cannot pause to particularise. Both ladies were in the full éclat of their charms, and both, it is almost needless to say, dressed to perfection, in silk and brocade, with furbelowed scarves, laced commodes, and diamond solitaires. Both carried fans; and both wore patches; but neither, we are happy to say, had sought to heighten the beauty of her complexion by paint. The two fair cousins were nearly of a height—neither of them being very tall—and both were slender and graceful of figure, their slim waists being charmingly defined by long bodices.

Such were the two lovely creatures who now dazzled the eyes of Mr. Law, so bewildering him, that, although not usually overcome by the sight of a pretty woman, he had scarcely recovered from his confusion when the party came up, and Beau Wilson stepping forward, formally presented him to the ladies. The smiles with which he was greeted at once dispelled his confusion, and the sweet accents of the low-voiced Lady Kate fell like music on his ear, and almost instantaneously found a way to his heart. However, it was Belinda who first addressed him. "We are charmed to make your acquaintance, Mr. Law," she said. "We have heard such wonderful accounts of you from the Duke of Argyle and the Marquis of Tweeddale, both of whom have written to my husband, describing you as the most extraordinary arithmetician, mathematician, and financier of the age, that we have been dying to behold you."

"Mr. Law doesn't in the least resemble the picture I had painted of him in imagination," remarked Lady Kate Knollys. "He will forgive my saying that he has more the air of a man of fashion than of science."

"Your ladyship is excessively obliging," replied Law. "I am gratified by the compliment, because having acquired all the knowledge I care to obtain, I now only desire to make a figure in society. But though your ladyship may not credit it, I have worked hard."

"Oh! I will believe anything you tell me, Mr. Law, however incredible it may sound, even if you declare that you have spent whole days and nights in the most abstruse studies."

"Such is the literal fact," he replied; "but henceforward I mean to devote my days and nights to amusement."

"I am glad to hear it," observed Belinda. "All the men of science I have known have been ugly, dull, ill-bred, awkward, and, shall I venture to say it, terrible bores. Now I don't think, Mr. Law, that you will prove a bore."

Lady Kate Knollys looked as if she didn't think so either.

"You forget, madam, that the Duke of Argyle described Mr. Law as a very accomplished and very agreeable man, as well as a person of extraordinary scientific attainments," interposed Beau Wilson. "You have travelled a good deal, I believe, Mr. Law?"

"Merely in Holland," he replied. "I resided for some years in Amsterdam, in order to investigate the mysterious operations of the great Dutch Bank, and during the time I contrived to penetrate all its secrets."

"I fear you didn't find the Dutch frows very handsome, Mr. Law," remarked Sir Harry.

"Not to compare with our own charming countrywomen, of course," replied Law; "but still some of them are extremely good looking. But I own that I didn't bestow much thought upon them, my time being fully occupied."

"With banking operations, of course," laughed Belinda. "But as those mysterious transactions don't interest us, we won't seek for any revelations concerning them. You must dine with us to-day, Mr. Law—I won't take any refusal, for you can have no engagement—and we'll take you afterwards to the Haymarket to see the 'Constant Couple'—my husband and myself are called the 'Constant Couple,' I ought to tell you. You'll be charmed with Wilks in *Sir Harry Wildair*, and Mrs Oldfield is an enchanting *Lady Lurewell*."

Law having bowed assent, she turned to Sir Harry, and gave him a similar invitation, but he excused himself, pleading a prior engagement. They then continued their promenade by the water, and during the walk Sir Harry devoted himself so exclusively to Lady Kate Knollys, that Law could not help thinking that he was by no means as indifferent to her ladyship's attractions as he had stated. Be this as it might, whether from coquetry, or some other motive, Lady Kate seemed anxious to talk to Mr. Law; but she could not accomplish her object, since he was engrossed by Belinda, who had now taken complete possession of him. Beau Wilson, whose lameness did not allow him to take much exercise, now sat down on a bench, and left them to themselves; and the little restraint he imposed upon his wife being thus removed, she became more lively and bewitching than ever, and Law was perfectly enraptured with her.

After an hour spent in this manner, Belinda thought it time to go home, so summoning the old beau, they proceeded to the spot where the carriage was stationed. On arriving there, they found a valet standing near the coach, who, bowing respectfully to Belinda, handed her a note. On opening it, and glancing at its contents, her cheek flushed angrily, and giving the note to her husband, she said to the man, "Tell your master that Mr. Wilson will send him an answer." On this the valet bowed and departed.

"'Tis from that audacious coxcomb, Carrington," observed the old beau, in a whisper to Law. "He begs permission to wait upon my wife at noon to-morrow."

"Insolent puppy!" exclaimed Law, who was now, in his turn, becoming jealous of Carrington. "You will put it out of his power to do so."

Beau Wilson smiled grimly, and signed to Law to get into the carriage.

Mr. Wilson's mansion in Berkeley-square, whither Law was now driven, was large and magnificently furnished. The entrance-hall was full of powdered lacqueys, amongst

whom were a couple of black pages, dressed in Oriental costume. No other guests being invited, our friends formed a pleasant partie carrée. The dinner was perfect. The old beau, being somewhat of a gourmand, kept a first-rate French cook, and the wines were just as good as the dishes. The champagne circulated freely. Belinda was in high spirits, and seemed bent upon completing her conquest of Law. Strange to say, the old beau manifested no sort of displeasure at his wife's almost undisguised flirtation with their handsome guest. But Lady Kate Knollys appeared annoyed at it.

As soon as dinner was over, the party set off to the Haymarket Theatre, where Law, who had never seen Mrs. Oldfield, was charmed with her grace and beauty, as well as with her admirable acting. At the close of the performances, as he handed Belinda to her carriage, she told him that she hoped to see a great deal of him during his stay in Town, to which he could not fail to make a suitable answer—and was about to add a few words of rather more passionate import, when he caught Lady Kate's eye fixed somewhat reproachfully upon him—and desisted. The old beau, however, cordially seconded his wife's invitation, and Law had to repeat his expressions of obligation. Before getting into the carriage, Wilson inquired in an undertone at what hour of the morning he had appointed the meeting, and being informed, said he would be ready.

The coach then drove away, and as Law proceeded to the Hummums, he felt that the enchantress, to whose fascinations he had been subjected, had cast a spell over him so potent that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to shake it off. He could not banish her image from his thoughts, and it haunted him in his dreams.

V.

THE DUEL IN HYDE PARK.

NEXT morning Law arose before seven, and as soon as he had completed his toilette, he bade his valet bring him his mantle and a couple of swords, which done, he sallied forth with the swords under his cloak, called a coach, and drove to Berkeley-square. Sir Harry having promised that a surgeon should be in attendance on the field, he did not give himself any concern on that score.

On arriving at Mr. Wilson's habitation, he found the old beau waiting for him, and they proceeded together to Hyde Park. On the way they talked together of indifferent matters, as if both were anxious to avoid allusion to the business on hand, but at last Law remarked,

"I hope you have kept your hand in practice, Mr. Wilson. If so, I shall have no doubt as to the result of the encounter."

"I have not been at a fencing-school, or handled a foil in private, for several years," replied Beau Wilson; "but I have not forgotten how to use a sword, as Charles Carrington shall find. I have fought several duels, and had determined not to fight another, but this has been forced upon me. If I did not punish this impertinent coxcomb, I should be subject to like annoyance from his friends. I am too much a man of the world, Mr. Law, not to be aware that I am ridiculed—justly ridiculed, perhaps—for marrying a young wife of great personal attractions, like Belinda. But the ridicule does not disturb me. Were I forty years younger I could not be more passionately in love with my wife than I am at sixty-five, and though the assertion may savour of vanity, I believe she loves me in return. At the time when I was page to my royal master, Charles the Second, old Sir John Denham, the poet, who had laughed at marriage all his life, became desperately enamoured of a lovely young creature, and

wedded her. Everybody laughed at him, and I among the rest, and we all thought the beautiful Lady Denham fair game, and sought an opportunity of making love to her. Whether she really favoured any one I can't pretend to say, but Sir John thought so, and terribly avenged the supposed injury to his honour."

"He poisoned his wife, I believe," remarked Law.

"He did; and I would do likewise, were I wronged in the same manner," rejoined Wilson, sternly. "I blamed Sir John Denham then, but I don't blame him now. I know what jealousy is."

"'Sdeath! sir," cried Law, alarmed at the serious tone in which the old beau spoke, "you don't entertain any suspicions of your wife? If so, for Heaven's sake cast them off, as I am quite sure they must be groundless."

"I entertain no suspicion, sir," said Wilson, moodily. "If I did——" And his countenance grew dark, and he became silent.

Law made no attempt to continue the conversation. A feeling of horror almost struck him dumb, and nothing more passed between them till they reached the entrance to Hyde Park, where they alighted, and set out in the direction of the place of rendezvous.

The old beau's lameness caused them to proceed very slowly. The morning was beautiful, all nature seeming to rejoice in the bright sunshine. A herd of deer were couched near the group of trees towards which they were steering, and some cattle were quietly grazing at a little distance.

The emotions inspired by the contemplation of this peaceful scene made the errand on which they were engaged appear peculiarly distasteful to Law, but he gave no utterance to his sentiments.

"How charming the park is at this early hour," observed the old beau, "and how fresh and exhilarating the air feels! It quite renovates my youth. I shall come here often of a morning—but no! I cannot. We keep such abominably late hours—plays, drums, ridottos,

masked balls, and the devil knows what besides!—night after night—night after night."

"Your young wife must be amused, sir," said Law. "But we shall be first on the field. Those deer would not be lying yonder if any one were near."

"True," replied Wilson, "but we are not quite there yet. I must halt for a moment. My leg pains me excessively."

While they were thus pausing, Law noticed three persons coming from the Kensington side of the Park, and pointed them out to the old beau, who said,

"Ay, there they are. But they must wait for me, or come on here, for I've fallen dead lame, and scarce think I can move a step farther. Lend me your arm, sir, and I'll try to hobble on."

With Law's assistance, the old beau limped slowly on, but he was obliged to stop every fifty yards, and long before he reached the trees, the deer had been roused, and their places occupied by Carrington and his second—the person with them being the surgeon.

As Mr. Wilson approached, his opponent advanced to meet him, and after a cold and formal salutation had been exchanged between them, retired, and prepared for the combat, while the old beau, with Law's aid, proceeded to divest himself of his velvet coat, waistcoat, and laced cravat.

The sight of his adversary appeared to have restored the old man to his pristine vigour. His eye blazed, his lameness forsook him, and he stood more erect than he had done for years. Law, who had begun to have some misgivings concerning him, was astounded at the sudden change, and conceived better hopes.

Meanwhile, the swords having been measured by the seconds, a weapon was delivered to each combatant, who proceeded to try the blade. Satisfied with the essay, they approached each other, saluted, and the old beau beat the appeal with as firm a foot as his young antagonist. In another moment they were engaged.

The conflict was of brief duration, but sufficiently long

to show that, though Carrington was a skilful and active swordsman, he was no match for so wary an antagonist as Beau Wilson, who, moreover, displayed a quickness and precision that could scarcely have been expected from his years. The old man dexterously parried every thrust made at him, and after a lunge in carte over the arm, returned in seconde with such rapidity and force, that his point pierced his adversary's right side, inflicting a severe though not dangerous wound.

"I think you have had enough, sir," said Beau Wilson, as the blood poured down Carrington's breast, and the sword dropped from his grasp.

At the same time the seconds and the surgeon rushed to the wounded man's assistance.

VI.

A CAUTION

After rendering all the aid he could to Charlie Carrington, who, as soon as his wound was bound up, was conveyed by the surgeon and Sir Harry to a carriage in waiting for them at a short distance from the place of encounter, Law accompanied Mr. Wilson to Berkeley-square—the old beau insisting upon taking him home with him to breakfast.

If Belinda had appeared charming overnight in full dress, she looked far more captivating in Law's eyes in a very becoming morning toilette. She affected some surprise at seeing the early visitor; but her smiles, and the slight blush that suffused her cheek, showed that he was by no means unwelcome.

"I hope breakfast is ready, my dear," observed her husband. "We have been walking in Hyde Park, and the morning air is very appetising. By-the-by, we met a friend of yours during our stroll—Charlie Carrington."

"Indeed!" she exclaimed. "Was it a chance encounter?"

"Well, perhaps he might have heard from his friend, Sir Harry, of our intention of being there—I can't say—but certain it is we found him, in a quiet spot near the trees; and the opportunity was too good to be neglected—ha! ha!—you understand, my dear—ha! ha!"

"Yes, I can't very well mistake your meaning, sir," she returned. "You have been fighting a duel with Mr. Carrington, and I must own I'm not sorry for it, since you have come off the victor He is a presumptuous coxcomb, and deserves punishment."

"He will have a fortnight for serious reflection, and will no doubt be more discreet in future," remarked Beau Wilson. "But let us to breakfast. I don't know how you feel, Mr. Law, but I am prodigiously hungry. An affair of this sort every morning would be very beneficial to my health."

With this they repaired to the dining-room, where an elegant repast was set forth, to which the old beau and his guest did ample justice. Before long, Lady Kate joined the party. A rich négligée in which she was attired suited her to admiration, and the sweet smiles she bestowed on Law on greeting him rather shook Belinda's influence over the unstable Scot.

During breakfast, the old beau proposed a number of plans for Law's amusement, saying that Belinda should carry him with her that evening to Lady Belhaven's rout, and next night to Lady Haversham's drum, and the night after that to Lady Sidley's masked ball—and so on—mentioning several other parties.

Breakfast over, they repaired to the drawing-room, where Belinda soon contrived to detach Law from Lady Kate, and engage him in a quiet chat with herself.

Lady Kate took up some work, the old beau had recourse to a book, and thus things went on for an hour, when Wilson, tired of reading, and perhaps thinking it might be well to put an end to his wife's tête-à-tête with Law, went up to the sofa on which they were seated, and,

apologising for the interruption, inquired of Belinda if she was going out in the carriage, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, he begged she would do him the favour to take him and Mr. Law to White's. Belinda readily assented, and calling to Lady Kate, bade her get ready for a drive.

"Pray excuse me, my dear," replied her ladyship, over whose sunny features a slight cloud had settled. "I cannot go out this morning."

"Eh day! what's the matter?" cried the other. "If you have got the vapours, a drive in the Park will be the best thing in the world to disperse them. Besides, I want your opinion about some dresses that Madame Mechlin is about to make for me. She has got a new assortment of lace, silks, and brocades. And then we'll go to Brimboriou's to look at his jewellery, for I must have another diamond necklace and ear-rings. Then, if we've time, we'll call at Nankin's and buy some old china. Nankin has the tiniest teacups you ever beheld—perfect loves! and the most stupendously large jars. Then I've twenty visits at least to pay, and I never can get through half of them unless you assist me. So you must come with me, Kate. I'll take no refusal. After we've done shopping, and paid all our visits, we'll go to the Mall in Saint James's Park, where the gentlemen can join us. Won't you, Mr. Law?" she added, casting a bewitching look at him.

Of course he bowed assent, but Lady Kate shook her head gravely, and said,

"Indeed you must excuse me, Belinda. Neither diamonds, dresses, nor old china—though I am passionately fond of them all—can tempt me forth to-day. My head aches frightfully," she added, pressing a laced handkerchief to her snowy brow.

"Your headache must have come very suddenly, dear, for you didn't complain at breakfast," remarked Belinda, sceptically.

"It has been coming on for the last hour," rejoined Lady Kate, somewhat significantly.

"Your ladyship must let me prescribe for you," said Beau Wilson; "or perhaps Mr. Law will be able to suggest a remedy."

"Pray smell this," said Law, producing a small silver vinaigrette, and giving it to her.

"It is indeed reviving," she replied; "but I must adhere to my resolution, Belinda. You can amuse yourself very well without me."

"I shall try, if you really won't go," rejoined Belinda, "but I must say you are monstrously disobliging."

She then quitted the room, and the old beau went with her, leaving Lady Kate and Law alone together.

"I am sorry your ladyship is indisposed," observed Law, taking a chair near her. "But I should never have guessed, from your looks, that you are unwell."

"Looks are deceptive, Mr. Law," rejoined Lady Kate, coldly. "I place little faith in them."

"You surprise me. I should have thought your ladyship a very good physiognomist. For my own part, I persuade myself that I can read a character at a glance."

"A very enviable faculty, and I wish I possessed it," she rejoined, listlessly. "I am curious to know what you think of me?"

"I should say you possess a thousand amiable qualities —with as few defects as can fall to the lot of a daughter of Eve. You are sincere, generous, warm-hearted, affectionate, devoted in friendship—I dare not say devoted in love—but—but——"

"But what?" she cried, with somewhat more animation. "Pray give the dark side of the picture."

"Nay, there is no dark side to it. I was going to say that you have a tendency to jealousy."

"There you are right, Mr. Law. I cannot lay claim to the good qualities you endow me with, but I know from experience that I am jealous. My jealousy, however, is of a very mild kind, and would never, I hope, be exhibited in the dreadful way in which the passion is displayed on the stage. I should never poison a faithless husband, or cause him to be assassinated. Such things are done, though, in real life."

"Not often in our time," observed Law, with a laugh. "We are too sensible to allow ourselves to be carried to such absurd extremes. Society would be decimated if every wife resorted to such violent expedients of getting rid of an inconstant spouse. I won't say what would happen if men were barbarous enough to treat their wives in a similar manner. Fortunately, married folk soon grow indifferent to each other, and trifling peccadilloes on either side are easily overlooked."

"What you say is very true, I fear, Mr. Law," replied Lady Kate, with a sigh. "But there are exceptions. I myself know a person, who, if he suspected his wife of infidelity, would unhesitatingly resort to the most terrible means of vengeance. As the lady to whom that gentleman is united is somewhat heedless in her conduct, I live in constant dread of such a catastrophe. Should you ever come in contact with the couple in question, Mr. Law, I bid you beware. Be assured you will have to deal with a very crafty and very dangerous person in the husband."

"I shall not neglect your ladyship's caution," said Law, who at once perceived the drift of her observations. "But if I should get into a difficulty, I must trust to you to extricate me from it."

"Nay, I cannot help you," she rejoined. "I have warned you—that is all I can do."

VII.

A SECOND VISIT TO WHITE'S.—MR. LAW WINS MORE MONEY AT PLAY.

THEIR conversation was here interrupted by the return of Beau Wilson and his wife; upon which Lady Kate arose, and said, in a lively tone,

"You will think me very changeable, Belinda—but if you will allow me, I *will* go out with you. My headache has entirely vanished."

"I am delighted to hear it," replied Belinda, whose looks rather contradicted her assertion. "But what a sudden improvement, my dear!"

"Yes; I can't account for it," said Lady Kate, smiling.

"But I can," observed Beau Wilson, glancing at Law. "I know who has performed the marvellous cure—ha! ha!"

"I only wish her ladyship's recovery could be justly attributed to me," said Law. "But I have really no share in it."

"I'll take Lady Kate's opinion in preference to yours," cried the old beau. "What says your ladyship? Is not Doctor Law the physician who has dispelled the vapours?"

And he laughed very heartily, until checked by his wife, who said, in a tone of pique,

"I really can't see the joke, sir. Surely Kate may change her mind without so much fuss being made about it. I have changed mine, and shan't go out this morning."

"Not go out!" exclaimed Lady Kate; "and give up the call at Mechlin's, and the diamonds, and the old china, and the twenty visits, and the walk in the Mall, eh?"

"You shall pay the visits for me, my dear," rejoined Belinda, flinging herself upon the sofa. "I should only be de trop during the walk in the Mall."

"Nay, madam, let me entreat you to go," said Law, with an imploring look. "The whole pleasure of the morning will be destroyed if you remain at home."

"Well, if you urge me I cannot refuse compliance," she rejoined.

This difficulty being got over, Lady Kate withdrew, and presently reappeared, having made a slight change in her attire. The carriage being announced at the same moment, the whole party entered it, and were driven in the first instance to White's, where the gentlemen alighted, and the ladies went on to the milliner's, to examine her stuffs and dresses.

Entering the coffee-house, Law and the old beau found a knot of young men, to whom Sir Harry was recounting the hostile meeting of the morning. On perceiving Wilson, he immediately stopped, and, advancing towards him, said,

"You will be glad, I think, to hear, sir, that your adversary is doing well. The surgeon assures me he will be out again in less than a fortnight."

"I am pleased to hear it, Sir Harry," returned Beau Wilson. "I only meant to give him a scratch—nothing more, on my honour."

"That I fully believe, sir. I have just been telling these gentlemen that you had Charlie's life at your disposal, and that he ought to thank you for sparing him. I have also borne testimony to your honourable conduct throughout the affair. Your courage has never been questioned, Mr. Wilson, but I doubt whether any of us would have displayed equal forbearance under such provocation."

"I am proud of your good opinion, Sir Harry," replied the old beau, bowing. "But let us change the topic. I have not seen the paper this morning. What news have we from the seat of war?"

"The Duke of Marlborough and Prince Louis of Baden are preparing to attack the Bavarian entrenchments at Schellenberg," replied Sir Harry.

"And the duke will carry them," cried the old beau. "He is victor in every engagement. Nothing can resist him. Excuse me, Mr. Law, while I glance at the details," he added, taking up the *Flying Post.*

"What say you to a game at hazard, Mr. Law?" remarked Sir Harry.

"With all my heart," replied the other.

"What! about to play again?" cried Wilson, looking up from his newspaper. "You're wrong, sir—you're wrong."

"How so?" rejoined Law. "In one respect I'm like the Duke of Marlborough. I always come off a victor."

So saying, he adjourned with his gay companions to the salon de jeu, leaving Beau Wilson to the undisturbed enjoyment of the *Flying Post.*

More than half an hour elapsed, and Law not making his appearance, the old beau, who had got through the scanty particulars of Marlborough's campaign, began to grow impatient. But he would not go into the play-room. In half an hour more he got up, and was just about to leave the coffee-house, when Sir Harry rushed in, and seeing his intention, begged him to wait a moment, as Mr. Law would be with him almost immediately.

"What the deuce is he about?" cried Wilson, sharply. "Has he lost all his money, that he remains so long at the gaming-table?"

"On the contrary," replied Sir Harry. "He has been winning all before him. But here he comes to answer for himself."

"I am almost sorry to hear of your success, sir," cried Beau Wilson to Law, as the latter entered the room. "If you had met with a reverse, it might have been of service to you."

"I never do meet with a reverse, Mr. Wilson," replied Law; "and I have played longer now than I intended, to oblige Sir Harry."

"Mr. Law has added another thousand pounds to our fund," observed Archer.

"If you go on in this way, you will speedily grow rich," said Beau Wilson, sarcastically. "But I don't like it—I don't like it."

VIII.

MR. LAW EXPLAINS HIS SYSTEM TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH AND THE EARL OF GODOLPHIN.

ATTENDED by Sir Harry and Law, Beau Wilson hobbled down the street, and made for Saint James's Park, observing, as they passed through the gateway between Marlborough House and the palace, "I have not forgotten my promise in regard to the duchess, Mr. Law. I have already written to her, begging permission to present you. I hope she won't hear of your successes at play. A reputation for gambling won't serve you with her grace."

"Don't imagine, sir, that play is an overmastering passion with me," replied Law. "It is simply an idle pastime, which I indulge in when the whim takes me. I have already said, that by calculation, combined with a certain amount of skill, and above all of coolness, I can almost always win, so that if I deemed such a course consistent with the character of a gentleman, I could very soon realise a large fortune by play."

"You think so?" cried Beau Wilson, shaking his head. "Permit me to doubt it, Mr. Law. I have heard many other persons affirm the same thing. But they were all ruined, and you will share the like fate, if you don't stop in time."

"I don't think so, sir," rejoined Law. "But I have no desire to be distinguished as a successful gambler; at least, on the small scale afforded by tables such as that we have just left. If I must figure as a gamester, let the stakes be millions—the whole wealth of a country—not paltry hundreds, unworthy consideration. Such a game I mean to play if I can find any government shrewd enough to confide its revenues to my management. You smile, Mr. Wilson, but mine is no chimerical project."

"I will take your word for its merits, sir," said the

old beau. "But you will hardly recommend your system to Lord Godolphin by describing it as a game of chance?"

"All financial operations on a grand scale savour of what is popularly called gambling," replied Law; "that is, an apparent hazard must be incurred, though there is none in reality to an enterprising and skilful player. All the financiers whom I have hitherto encountered have been too timid, and not having minds comprehensive enough to grasp the whole of a vast and complex scheme, have seen difficulties and dangers that exist but in imagination."

"I am not a financier," said Wilson; "but it seems to me that a grand and comprehensive measure, which is to treble, or quadruple, the resources of a nation, ought to be free from any reproach of gambling."

"My scheme is as sound and irreproachable as any ever submitted to the world," said Law, "and I believe it will be found without a flaw. Certain I am it will work well, and its results will be astounding. Incredible fortunes will be realised by those who engage in it."

"Recollect that I am to be an extensive shareholder, Mr. Law," cried Sir Harry. "I hold you to your promise."

"You must excuse me if I stand aloof to see how the scheme works," observed the old beau.

"Then you won't make a fortune by the shares," said Law.

By this time they had reached the Mall, which was very full. Fatigued with the walk, Beau Wilson took a seat on a bench, and Law sat down beside him. Sir Harry left them to speak to some acquaintances, and as soon as he was gone, the old beau remarked, in a confidential tone to his companion, "I'll tell you a secret respecting our friend. He is paying court to Lady Kate Knollys."

"So I conjectured," replied the other. "And a fortunate fellow he will be if he obtains her hand."

"He won't obtain it, and I'll tell you why," remarked the old beau. "Lady Kate has every recommendation but one. She is very handsome, as I need not tell you—

very amiable, as you must have discovered—the daughter of one earl and the sister of another—but she has one defect, which will more than counterbalance all these recommendations with Sir Harry, when he finds it out."

"In Heaven's name, what is it?" cried Law. "Is she poor?"

"She has five thousand a year now," replied the old beau. "But it leaves her if she marries again. Now, then, you understand why Sir Harry, who is a fortune-hunter, will fight shy when he ascertains how she is circumstanced. I mean to give him a hint this very morning. You'll see how his passion will cool."

"He ought to be enchanted to take her without a farthing," cried Law.

"Sir Harry is no such model of disinterested affection," rejoined Wilson. "I'm very much mistaken if he doesn't walk off at the first notice."

Shortly afterwards, Sir Harry rejoined them, and the old beau being sufficiently rested, all three commenced a promenade, taking the direction of Buckingham House, a large mansion terminating the Mall on the west, and occupying the site of the present palace.

While they were walking slowly along, Belinda's superb coach entered the drive on the side of the Mall, and being stopped by Wilson, the ladies alighted from it, and the whole party moved on together.

The Mall at this moment was filled with persons of the highest quality and fashion, and the richness and variety of their dresses, which were of velvets, silks, and other costly stuffs, contributed not a little to the brilliancy of the scene. But amid that gay throng, which included most of the reigning beauties, Law could discern none that in his opinion surpassed in loveliness the two fair creatures at his side.

In the course of the promenade, Beau Wilson contrived to say a few words in private to Sir Harry, and from that moment a marked change took place in the deportment of the latter towards Lady Kate. Disgusted with his conduct, Law paid her ladyship more attention than he

had hitherto done, and she soon made it evident that she preferred him to her mercenary admirer.

Law dined that day in Berkeley-square, and so did Sir Harry—in fact, there was a large dinner-party—and the old beau took care that Lady Kate and the Scot should sit together. Later on in the evening all the company went to Lady Belhaven's rout, which was a very brilliant affair, and it was generally noticed that Mr. Law devoted himself to Lady Kate Knollys, while Sir Harry, anxious to prove that he had given up all idea of her ladyship, whispered it about that she and Mr. Law were very likely to make a match of it.

On the following day, in pursuance of his promise, Beau Wilson took Law to Marlborough House. The duchess was then in the plenitude of her power, and by the despotic sway which her commanding intellect and imperious manner enabled her to maintain over Queen Anne, might be almost said to hold in her hand the destinies of the kingdom. Though she was now turned forty, the duchess's extraordinary personal attractions were scarcely diminished, while her demeanour was in the highest degree stately and imposing—in fact, perfectly regal. Her reception of Law, on his presentation by Wilson, was exceedingly gracious. Pleased with his graces of person and manner, and submitting to the fascinating influence which he exercised at will, she listened to him with much interest while he detailed his scheme, and when he had done, said,

"I don't profess to understand your system entirely, Mr. Law, but it appears to me to be a very bold project, and must be productive of extraordinary results one way or the other. But thus much I will promise you. Your proposition shall be carefully and dispassionately considered by those capable of forming a judgment upon it; and if approved, it shall be adopted."

"That is all I ask, madam," replied Law.

After questioning him further, and receiving explanations which appeared sufficiently satisfactory to her, the duchess invited him, with unwonted condescension, to attend her levees, and dismissed him.

Next day, Law was presented by Sir Harry to the Earl of Godolphin, and the prime minister's reception of him was quite as gracious as the Duchess of Marlborough's had been: in fact, the duchess had already paved the way for him. As rapidly and as clearly as he could, Law developed his system to Lord Godolphin. We shall not follow him in his details, as it will be necessary to enter into the subject more fully hereafter, but we may remark that the foundation of his system was Credit, and that he proposed to represent all state revenues and all landed property by paper money of equal value.

"Then you would proscribe gold and silver, Mr. Law," observed Lord Godolphin, as the other concluded his statement, "and only employ such small metallic currency as must be indispensable in trifling commercial transactions."

"Such is my design, my lord. On reflecting profoundly on the matter, I am satisfied that precious metals are improperly employed as agents of circulation. Paper money ought only to be used, because it has no intrinsic value. This is the foundation of my economical theory; and though, on the first blush, it may appear illusory, I think I can convince your lordship that it is sound. By means of paper money, and a system of credit, such as I propose, the circulation would immediately be quadrupled, and since every branch of trade and industry must be immensely stimulated and encouraged, so the prosperity of the country will infallibly be increased in the same ratio."

"You talk very plausibly, I must own, Mr. Law," said Lord Godolphin, smiling. "But I am not quite a convert to your system. I should be disinclined to make the experiment, since its failure must inevitably cause a national bankruptcy. But the plan may, no doubt, prove tempting to an absolute monarch, as it will place the whole wealth of his kingdom in his own hands; and though I must decline it, my conviction is that the project will be adopted—possibly by France. If so, and success attends the measure, you will rank as first financier in Europe."

Law then retired, extremely well pleased with the interview, though it had not led to the result he anticipated.

IX.

BEAU WILSON BELIEVES HIMSELF DUPED.

Mr. Law now became the fashion, and invitations showered upon him from persons of the highest rank. But though amusement was his chief object, he did not devote himself to it exclusively. While passing the afternoon in the Parks, at White's, and at places of fashionable resort, and the nights at the Opera, the play-houses, routs, and masquerades, he spent the mornings in the City, and could be seen regularly in 'Change-alley, and at other places of business, and was known to have realised considerable sums by well-timed speculations in the public funds, and in foreign stocks. In the City also he made acquaintance with many eminent merchants, by whom he was regarded as a person remarkably skilful in all matters of finance and credit. So highly, indeed, were his abilities esteemed, that a partnership was offered him by a great discount house, and similar overtures were made to him by another large mercantile firm; but he declined these and other advantageous proposals, having more important objects in view. Not only did he enrich himself by such legitimate speculations as we have mentioned, but he frequented the Groom-Porters', and other gaming-houses, and won large sums of money at faro, basset, lansquenet, and hazard—the same good fortune attending him that had marked his first appearance at White's. Before he had been a month in town, it was stated, by those who seemed to have authority for what they asserted, that he had won more than twenty thousand pounds. His unvarying success at play naturally occasioned comment, and excited suspicion among the losers; but though he

was narrowly watched, no malpractices could be attributed to him. On the contrary, he himself detected and exposed the tricks of certain sharpers who sat down to play with him.

During all this time a close intimacy subsisted between Mr. Wilson and Law, and nothing whatever occurred to interrupt their good understanding. Ordinarily jealous and suspicious, the old beau placed unbounded confidence in his friend. Belinda appeared quite reconciled to the transfer of Law's attentions from herself to Lady Kate, and the latter appeared charmed by the devotion of her handsome admirer. On his part, Law did his best to make himself agreeable to all three. Consulted upon all occasions by husband and wife, he settled all their little differences, and made all things so pleasant, that Mr. Wilson declared he had never been so happy since his marriage as now.

But there were people malicious enough to assert that Beau Wilson and Lady Kate were both egregiously duped by Belinda and Law, between whom, these censors affirmed, a tender liaison subsisted.

One morning, Beau Wilson entered White's Coffee-house, and at once made his way to a table at which Charlie Carrington, who had long since recovered from his wound, was seated with his companions. The old beau's countenance wore a very stern expression. As he approached, Carrington got up and made him a formal bow. Stiffly returning the salutation, Wilson said, "I received a letter from you this morning, Mr. Carrington, and am come to answer it in person. Do you mean to adhere to the statement therein made?"

"If I did not, I should scarcely have written the letter, sir," rejoined Carrington, haughtily. "All I have said is true, and unfortunately susceptible of proof."

"If it be so——" cried the old beau, with a sudden burst of fury. Then suddenly moderating himself, he added, "Allow me a word with you in private."

"There is no need to retire, sir," rejoined Carrington. "The matter is common talk."

"How say you?—common talk!" cried the old beau, furiously. "You are all vile slanderers thus to sully the reputation of a most virtuous woman, and assail the character of an honourable gentleman. I disbelieve the report—I disbelieve it, I tell you."

"As you please, sir," rejoined Carrington. "If you are willing to be duped, that is your own affair. Your wife, no doubt, is a model of fidelity, and your friend incapable of injuring you. I congratulate you on your easy and philosophic temperament."

"Grant me patience, Heaven!" cried the old beau, trembling with suppressed rage. "Is not this an invention, Sir Harry? Is it not a vile calumny? Say so, that I may force it down its fabricator's throat."

"I would rather you did not appeal to me, Mr. Wilson," rejoined the other; "and I must express my profound regret that Charles Carrington should have written to you on the subject."

"But you discredit the report?—you pronounce it false? Speak, sir, speak!"

But as Sir Harry remained silent, he turned to the others, and said,

"How say you, gentlemen? Do you believe the slanderous tale?"

"Upon my soul, sir, I would rather not answer the question," said Tom Bagot.

"Nor I," added Jerry Ratcliffe.

"I understand," replied Wilson, sinking into a chair. "You all believe it. Give me a glass of water. I feel very faint."

"How can you torture him thus?" observed Sir Harry to Carrington.

"He deserves to suffer," replied the other, in a tone of unconcern. "What could the old fool expect when he married a young wife?"

This remark reached Wilson's ear, and caused him to start instantly to his feet.

"You will have much to answer for in the work you have begun, sir," he said, in a strange tone, to Carrington,

"I am prepared to answer for all I have done, sir," rejoined the other. "But you ought to thank me for the service I have rendered you. Would you rather remain in ignorance of the wrong you are enduring? Would you prefer to be pointed at as a contented wittol?"

"No! no! no!" cried the old beau, with a look of anguish. "If I have been betrayed by the wife whom I adored, and the friend whom I trusted, I would rather know it. Never more—never more shall I have faith in man or woman."

"Poh! poh! don't take it thus, Mr. Wilson," said Sir Harry. "'Tis an every-day occurrence. You are not the only man who has been deceived by his wife and his best friend."

"I know it," cried the old beau, bitterly. "I know that in our hollow and heartless society these perfidies are frequent, that the most sacred ties are constantly broken, and that people only laugh when such things happen."

"That shows the wisdom of the world, Mr. Wilson," said Sir Harry. "People laugh because they are indifferent, and because their own turn may come next. You would have done well not to marry at your age, sir. It was scarcely like one, who lived in Charles the Second's days, and must have known what was the usual fate of elderly gentlemen with pretty wives, to take so imprudent a step."

"Ay, ay, I dare say Mr. Wilson made love to many a fair dame in his younger days," remarked Tom Bagot, with a laugh—"perhaps to Lady Denham?"

"Why to Lady Denham, sir?" cried the old beau, with sudden fierceness. "Why single out her?"

"Merely because her name occurred to me," replied the other. "But we all know you were a man of gallantry, Mr. Wilson, and did not respect your friend's wife. You cannot expect to be treated better than you treated others. The world has not grown better since you were one-and-twenty."

"It has grown ten thousand times worse," rejoined the old beau, bitterly. "I hear it constantly asserted that

the gallants of Charles the Second's time were profligate, but they were nothing to the shameless rakes of the present day."

"Ha! ha! ha! that's all very fine," cried Sir Harry. "But we know better. However, I don't think society has much improved, and, between ourselves, I don't think it ever *will* improve, for human nature must continue the same. All I desire is, that you should bear the matter philosophically."

The old beau took no notice of the remark, but said, "I suppose this story has become town talk—and is laughed at everywhere—at all the clubs and coffee-houses. We shall have it in the papers next, if they have not got it already."

"I've looked them carefully over this morning," said Jerry Ratcliffe, "but I can find no allusion to it. I dare say there will be something piquant to-morrow."

"Not a doubt of it," said the old beau, bitterly. "Well, I'll give them something to talk about."

"Don't do anything rashly, Mr. Wilson, I beg of you," said Sir Harry.

"Never fear, sir," rejoined the old beau. "I have long resolved upon the course I ought to pursue under circumstances like the present."

"Then you did calculate upon the contingency, sir?" observed Charles Carrington, in a jeering tone.

"I did," replied the old beau, sternly; "and am prepared for it."

And bowing haughtily round he quitted the room.

X.

HOW THE FURIES TOOK POSSESSION OF THE OLD BEAU'S BREAST.

SCARCELY knowing where he was going, the old beau, on quitting White's Coffee-house, proceeded to St. James's Park, and crossing the Mall, made his way towards Rosamond's Pond, a small basin of water lying on the south of the long canal.

He then struck into the Birdcage-walk, but had scarcely entered it, when he perceived, at the further extremity of the path, two persons, whom he took to be his wife and Law, but, their backs being towards him, he could not of course distinguish their features. They appeared to be engaged in very tender conversation, and so engrossed were they by each other, that they did not hear his footsteps.

The presence of Law, who had told him he was going to Windsor on that day, was confirmatory of his worst suspicions. His first impulse was to hurry after them, load them with reproaches, and take instant vengeance upon his treacherous friend. But he checked himself, and perceiving they were about to turn, quitted the path, and concealed himself behind a large elm-tree.

A mist came over his eyes, and there was such a strange buzzing in his ears, caused by the sudden rush of blood to the head, that he could neither see nor hear distinctly. However, he made out enough from Law's impassioned speech to convince him he had been wronged; and more than all, he learnt that the amorous pair were to meet that very night, at a quarter before twelve, in the garden behind his own house in Berkeley-square—Law, it appeared, being provided with a key of the garden-gate.

On acquiring this intelligence, a deadly sickness seized him, and but for the support of the tree he must have fallen to the ground. Even when the sickness had passed,

he felt such extraordinary sensations in the head, that he thought he must be going mad; and it would be charity to believe, from what subsequently occurred, that he really was mad.

Staggering into the path, he looked about for the guilty pair, but they had long since disappeared. Hell's torments raged in his breast, and drove him to such a pitch of desperation, that he hurried to the brink of the pool with the intention of ending his woes. Had he thus died, one fearful crime, at least, would have been spared his soul. But the hand of fate arrested him.

After wandering about for some time, he reached a secluded spot amid the trees, where he thus gave vent to his emotions:

"And she has deceived me!" he cried, in accents that showed how terribly his heart was wrung. "She whom I idolised—for whom I would have laid down my life, has proved false. The priceless treasure is stolen from me. She upon whom I gazed with rapture, whose lightest word was music in my ears, has forsaken me. Had she died, I could have borne the loss—but this blow is worse than death. No agony can be sharper than that I now endure. Were it to last, I must go mad. Nay, methinks I am mad already. My love is turned to hate. My breast is on fire—nothing but blood will quench the flame. Tears and supplications shall not move me. Should she sue for mercy on her bended knees I will not spare her. No—she shall die. As to the villain who has robbed me of this treasure—who has made me the most miserable of men—an object of scorn and derision—I will have his heart's blood—ay, though I perish by the hangman's hand. I will have such revenge as shall fright the very fools who mock me now."

Growing somewhat calmer, he quitted the Birdcage-walk, and went towards Queen-street, where he took a sedan-chair, which conveyed him home. Arrived there, he went at once to his study, giving peremptory orders that he must not be disturbed, and bolting the door, he remained by himself till dinner-time.

How he passed this long interval it would be vain to

inquire, but though, when next seen, he had regained his external composure, the fearful turmoil in his breast had not ceased, neither was his vengeful purpose abandoned.

There were no guests that day—the only person at dinner besides himself and his wife being Lady Kate. As may be supposed, the meal passed off in a very dull manner.

At its conclusion, when the servants had retired, Belinda said to her husband,

"How excessively stupid you are to-day, sir. I declare you have not uttered a word during dinner, and your moody looks have checked all conversation on our part. Do be a little more cheerful, I beg of you. 'Tis a pity we haven't dear Mr. Law to enliven us."

"Dear Mr. Law!" muttered Wilson. "Fiends take him!"

"Both Lady Kate and I are quite disconsolate at his absence," pursued Belinda. "But he was obliged to go to Windsor, and I fear we shan't see him till to-morrow."

"Hum!" exclaimed the old beau. "I thought you might see him to-night."

"See him to-night!" she exclaimed, glancing at Lady Kate. "Where?"

"At Lady de Burgh's rout," returned the old beau, looking keenly at her.

"No, he won't be there, or I would go to the party," observed Belinda. "You must make my excuses to Lady de Burgh—say I'm indisposed—whatever you please. You won't tell stories, for your moodiness at dinner has really made me feel ill."

"And pray make my excuses at the same time, Mr. Wilson," added Lady Kate. "Tell her I have thought it necessary to stay at home with Belinda."

"She, too, is in the plot," muttered Beau Wilson. "But I can't deliver these excuses," he added, aloud. "I don't intend to go to the party myself."

"But you must, sir—I insist upon it," cried Belinda.

"Yes, indeed you must go, Mr. Wilson," said Lady Kate. "It is to be a charming assembly, and you will enjoy it so much."

"If I do go," rejoined Wilson, "I shall only just show myself to Lady de Burgh, and come out."

"You will be good enough to obey my commands, sir," said Belinda, "and those are, that you do not return before one o'clock—not before one o'clock, mind!"

"One would think you must have some particular reason for desiring me to stay out till that hour," remarked Wilson.

"So I have, and when you're in a very good humour I'll tell it you," she rejoined. "But you're a cup too low. A glass of claret will make you feel more cheerful. Finish that bottle, take a nap afterwards, and you'll be all right. Come to my room before you go to Lady de Burgh's to say 'good night.'"

She then quitted the room with Lady Kate, adding laughingly to the latter as they passed through the hall,

"I think I have managed very cleverly to get rid of him."

"You have managed admirably, my dear," replied Lady Kate. "But what a strange humour he is in. He has decidedly got a fit of the sullens."

"Oh, it will pass when he has drunk his claret and had his nap," replied Belinda, laughing, as they ascended the staircase.

She little knew what awaited her.

XI.

A TRAGIC INCIDENT.

LEFT alone, Beau Wilson remained for some time a prey to terrible reflections. He neither drank wine, nor sought temporary oblivion in slumber, but held communion with himself in this wise:

"Shall I do it?—Shall I kill this beautiful, this adorable creature, merely because she cannot love an old man like me? Better—far better destroy myself and let her live. But no! I cannot bear the idea of leaving her for another. That thought is madness. But will it not be revenge enough if I slay him? Will not his blood wash out the stain upon my honour? No! they must both die. I will not falter in my purpose."

He then arose, and was moving towards the door, when Lady Kate softly entered the room.

"So you are awake and stirring, Mr. Wilson," she said. "I feared to disturb you from your after-dinner nap. Will you spare me a few minutes?"

The old beau offered her a chair, and took one beside her. She then went on: "I am sure you will give me your advice in a matter of great importance to myself. It must have been apparent to you, I think, that my affections have been given for some time to a certain person—you start, as if what I said surprised you—but surely you must be aware that a mutual attachment subsists between myself and Mr. Law."

"Pardon me, Lady Kate," he rejoined. "Till this moment I was not aware of the circumstance. I am sorry —very sorry to hear it."

"Sorry, Mr. Wilson!" she exclaimed. "I expected a very different answer from you. I thought you had the highest opinion of Mr. Law."

"Hear me, Lady Kate," said Wilson, sternly. "If you

have any love for this person, you must crush it, whatever the effort may cost you. He is utterly unworthy of you."

"But I cannot retreat," cried Lady Kate. "You force me to speak plainly, sir, and to tell you that I have not only given him my heart, but promised him my hand."

"You have acted most foolishly," rejoined Wilson. "He has deceived you. Do not ask for any explanation, for I cannot give it. But let me say in a word that you can never marry this adventurer—this charlatan—this sharper—this rake. It shall be my business to prevent it."

"The epithets you think fit to apply to a gentleman to whom, as I have told you, I am engaged, prevent any further conversation between us, Mr. Wilson," said Lady Kate, rising proudly from her seat. "Mr. Law will know how to defend himself from such aspersions, but I did not expect to find you a calumniator."

"Suspend your judgment till to-morrow morning, madam," rejoined Wilson, "and you will find that I am justified in what I have said. I pity you from the bottom of my heart."

"I do not desire your pity, sir," she cried, sharply. "I tell you, that all you have uttered to Mr. Law's disadvantage is unfounded. Let me add, that it is only my affection for Belinda that can induce me to remain another moment under your roof."

"Be not angry with me, I pray you," said the old beau, in a tone so sorrowful that the gentle heart of his listener was touched. "The interest I feel in your ladyship makes me speak thus. It is only within the last few hours that the dark side of Law's character has been revealed to me. Till then I believed him loyal and trustworthy. This morning I should have been as eager as your ladyship to defend him—but my eyes are opened now."

"You alarm me, Mr. Wilson," cried Lady Kate. "What has come to your knowledge? Tell me, I conjure you. I will listen to you patiently now."

"Shall I speak plainly to her?—shall I tell her all?" said the old beau to himself. "I will—I will. Yet no! that were to destroy my plan of vengeance."

"You hesitate," cried Lady Kate. "Then you have nothing to tell. You cannot justify your calumnies."

"Wait till to-morrow, madam. You will then know all, and will understand the cause of my hesitation."

"Why till to-morrow?—why must I wait till then?—why should you condemn me to a night of misery, when by a few words you can relieve me?"

"Nothing I could say would relieve your anxiety, madam, but would rather heighten it. Press me no further—it will be useless. If we meet in the morning, I will tell you all. If not—Heaven bless you!—good night."

Seeing from his manner that nothing further could be obtained from him, Lady Kate withdrew.

Again left alone, the old beau blamed himself that he had not made Lady Kate the partner of his troubles, that by mingling their griefs they might have found mutual solace, and he half resolved to seek her for that purpose. But ere he could reach the door the better impulse had fled, and he recurred to his fell design.

"No weakness," he muttered—"no weakness. The deed must be done."

He then repaired to his study, and unlocking an escritoire, took out a bundle of letters, and began to read them, but the emotions excited by their perusal compelled him to desist.

He next took up a miniature of his wife, and gazing at it with irrepressible admiration, exclaimed,

"Ay, those are the features that captivated me. How beautiful she looks!—how guileless!—how passionately I loved her! But love is gone for ever," he added, dashing the picture to the ground, and trampling upon it. "I awake from my infatuated dream to find myself betrayed. Did she ever love me? No—no!—never—never—never!"

His emotions were so poignant that he thought he should have died. On recovering from the paroxysm, he replaced the letters in the escritoire, and opened a cupboard, from which he took a small medicine-chest.

For a few moments he stood irresolute, with folded

arms, gazing at the box, and the expression of his ghastly features was perfectly fiendish. At last, he took a small key and applied it to the chest, but his hand trembled so, that, after more than one ineffectual attempt, the key fell from his grasp.

"Were I superstitious I should deem this an interposition of some good spirit to turn me from my fatal purpose," he murmured. "But I will not be deterred. Let me think upon my wrongs, and be firm."

With that he unlocked the chest, and took from it a phial filled with a liquid clear as water.

Again a nervous trembling seized him, and in his agitation he nearly dropped the phial; but he had just managed to secure it, when he was confounded by the unexpected entrance of his wife.

"I have come to see what is the matter with you," she said. "Lady Kate tells me something has disturbed you. Are you not well? You look unusually pale. What is it?"

"Nothing, nothing," he replied, hastily. "Don't trouble yourself about me. I shall soon be better. I was coming to your room to say 'good night' before going to Lady de Burgh's, but since you are here, pray take a seat. I have something to say to you."

"Well, don't keep me long. I'm very tired, and want to go to bed," she said, yawning terribly.

"Spare me a few minutes. You will have a long and sound sleep presently," he said, in a sombre tone, and regarding her fixedly.

"How strangely you look at me," she cried. "Lady Kate said there was something odd about you, and I find it true. Do smile a little bit. You'll frighten everybody if you look so savage. You remind me of Bluebeard in the fairy piece, when he is about to cut off his wife's head. I hope you don't mean to kill me."

"Kill you!" echoed Wilson. "What put that thought into your silly head?"

"Your ferocious looks," she rejoined. "Some people say you are jealous enough to do some horrid deed. But

I have no fears. You are too fond of Belinda to cut off her head—eh, M. Barbe Bleu?"

"Since we have been united, madam, have I ever treated you otherwise than with kindness?" asked the old beau.

"Your conduct has been praiseworthy on the whole, though you have shown strange fits of temper now and then," she rejoined. "Luckily, I don't mind them."

"Answer me one question, Belinda. Have you ever repented your marriage with me?"

"Repented it! to be sure. A hundred times, at least. Whenever we have a little quarrel, I always long for a separation; but then you invariably make me such nice presents afterwards, that I am content to be reconciled. By-the-by, you have never given me the diamond rivière you promised me after our last squabble."

"Enough of this trifling, madam," said the old beau, sternly. "I have far different matters to discuss with you. Strange stories have been told me concerning you —stories damaging to yourself, and to my honour."

"And you believe those calumnies? You suppose me capable of such misconduct?" she cried, rearing her proud form to its height, and regarding him with indignant scorn.

"Yes, madam, I do believe them. It is useless to attempt to carry off the matter with a high hand. I believe in your guilt—ay, *guilt*, madam. Your intrigue with Mr. Law is the talk of the Town. Aha! you thought me your dupe. But if I am blind, other people are not. One of my kind friends was considerate enough —curse him!—to send me a letter this morning acquainting me with your conduct. Besides, I have had confirmation of the statement. I overheard what passed between you and your paramour in the Birdcage-walk this morning, and I learnt that he is to be in the garden to-night."

"All this admits of easy explanation, sir, but I shall not condescend to give it," said Belinda, preparing to quit the room.

But the old beau anticipated her purpose, and hastily locking the door, put the key in his pocket.

"Do you mean to detain me against my will?" she said, affrighted by his manner.

And she attempted to ring the bell, but he seized her arm, and forced her into a chair. Drawing his sword, he then bade her prepare for instant death.

"I cannot believe you are in earnest," she cried. "This is done to terrify me."

"Make your peace with Heaven, I say, madam," rejoined Wilson. "You have not many minutes to live."

"Mercy! mercy!" she cried, reading her fate in his looks. "By your former love for me, I implore you to spare me."

"All pity has been banished from my breast by your perfidy," cried Wilson. "You shall die."

"Not by your hand," she shrieked. "I am innocent. I swear it. Hear what I have to say."

"I will hear nothing now," said Wilson, in a frenzied tone. "You seek only to gain time. Utter a cry, and I will plunge my sword into your heart. You are beyond all human aid."

"Then help me, Heaven!" she ejaculated.

"I cannot shed her blood," said Wilson. "Drink this," he added, taking the phial from his vest.

"Is it poison?" she cried.

"Drink it!" he rejoined. "I give you choice of death. Or this, or the sword!"

Unable to resist him, she took the phial, placed it to her lips, and after swallowing a portion of its contents, fell, with a half-stifled shriek, to the ground.

Wilson sank upon a chair, averted his gaze, and tried to shut his ears to the fearful sounds that reached them.

All was soon still. Nevertheless, he did not dare to look round, but remained for some time in the same posture.

At last, the clock struck eleven, and roused by the sound, he arose, muttering, "I have more to do."

A dreadful shudder passed over his frame as he cast

one look at the inanimate form of her he had once loved so well.

But the furies were still busy in his breast, and pity could not gain access to it. Unlocking the door, he went forth, repeating the words, "I have more to do."

XII.

AT THE GARDEN-GATE.

THAT night, about three-quarters of an hour after the tragic event we have just narrated, a sedan-chair was set down in Hay-street, near the wall of a garden evidently belonging to a large mansion situated in the adjacent square; and a gentleman wrapped in a cloak got out, and bade the chairmen await his return.

"All right, yer hon'r," replied our old acquaintance, Terry O'Flaherty. "Don't hurry on our account, Mr. Laa. We'll find plenty ov amusement talkin' to each other. But for the love of Heaven stop a minute, sir—there's somebody watchin' yonder. Get into the cheer again, and we'll just carry yer hon'r round the corner to baffle him."

"Poh, poh, nonsense!" cried Law. "There is nothing to be alarmed at. Wait here till I return." So saying, he unlocked a door in the garden-wall, and disappeared.

Scarcely was he gone, when the individual who had excited Terry's apprehensions crossed the street, making his way as quickly as his lameness would allow towards the very door in the garden-wall through which Law had passed.

The night was dark, and there were no lamps in the street; nevertheless, as the personage in question drew near, he was recognised by the chairmen, owing to the peculiarity of his gait.

"Saints protect us!" exclaimed Terry, "it's owld Beau

Wilson hisself. I know him by his lame leg. There'll be murder in a minute. We mustn't let him into the garden, Pat. Halloa, sir," he added, "you can't go in there."

Wilson, however, paid no heed to the injunction, but was proceeding to unlock the door, when his arms were seized and pinioned by the two stalwart chairmen.

"Zounds, rascals!" he cried, struggling ineffectually to get free; "would you prevent me from going into my own house? Liberate me instantly, at your peril."

"If this is your own house, sir, you had better go in at the front door," replied Terry. "Get into the cheer, and we'll take you round to it."

"Ay, get in," added Pat Molloy, endeavouring to force him into the sedan-chair.

The old beau, however, violently resisted their efforts, and as they were afraid of proceeding to extremities with him, he at length succeeded in extricating himself from their clutches. But Terry was resolved, at all hazards, to prevent him from entering the garden, and accordingly planted himself before the door.

"Stand aside, sirrah!" cried Wilson, furiously, "or you will repent it. A man has just furtively entered my garden, and if you hinder me from pursuing him, you will be treated as his accomplices. The law will deal rigorously with you, I can promise you."

"Tut! the law won't meddle wi' honest men like us, so we're not afeerd," rejoined Terry, stoutly. "But your hon'r must be mistaken. The jontleman we set down went into yonder house," pointing to a habitation a short way down the street.

"It is false!" cried Wilson. "I saw him go in here. Stand aside, I command you, or it will be worse for you." And he drew his sword.

"Och, murder! I'll be kilt!" cried Terry. "Seize hould ov him, Pat, or he'll spit me wid his toasting-fork."

Though menaced by the old beau, who swore he would run him through the body if he did not move, Pat re-

solutely kept his place, and it is difficult to say what might have been the end of the dispute, if a watchman had not at this moment turned the corner of the street, and, on being hailed by Wilson, instantly hurried to the spot. The watchman's first business was to hold up his lantern and scrutinise the countenances of the parties, and as the light fell upon the marked features of the old beau, he instantly cried out that it was Mr. Wilson.

"You're sure of that, Charley?" said Terry.

"As sure as I am that you're an Irishman," replied the other.

"Then whatever you do, don't let him into the garden," said Terry. "Take him round to the front door, and ask the servants to put him to bed as quickly as they can. He has had too much to drink."

To this allegation the old beau gave an indignant denial, but the watchman, who was not altogether sober himself, was inclined to think there might be some truth in it; and hoping, at all events, to obtain a crown for his pains, he was trying to persuade Wilson to comply with Terry's suggestion, when two other persons appeared on the scene. These were Sir Harry and Charlie Carrington.

Sir Harry immediately offered his services to the old beau, who, taking him aside, said, in a low tone, "You will wonder what I am doing here with these fellows, but the fact is, I have been on the watch for Law, and having seen him pass through that door into my garden, I should have instantly followed had I not been hindered by those chairmen, who are in his pay. Come with me, Sir Harry, I entreat you; and as the villain must at once give me satisfaction for the injury he has done me, I will beg of you to act as my second?"

"I don't see how I can refuse you, sir, if you are determined upon an immediate encounter," replied Sir Harry; "and to tell you the truth, it was the hope of preventing mischief that brought Carrington and myself here."

"Then you knew of the assignation?" cried Wilson.

"Do not ask me, sir," rejoined Sir Harry. "I don't desire to add fuel to the flame already raging within your breast. Let it suffice that, believing you are entitled to demand instant satisfaction from Law, I am ready to serve as your second. The only stipulation I make is, that Charles Carrington shall accompany us. His services may be required on the other side. Bad as it is, the affair must be conducted en règle."

"I care not how it is conducted," rejoined the old beau. "I mean to kill the villain."

"Of course, my dear sir, such is your intention. But you must kill him according to rule, or it will be accounted assassination. Allow me a word with Carrington."

"Be brief, then," said the old beau. "Too much time has been wasted already. The villain may escape me."

"No fear of that, sir. If he quits the garden, he must come out this way."

After a short conference between Sir Harry and Carrington, they informed the old beau that they were ready to attend him.

Seeing it was vain to offer any further opposition, Terry withdrew from his post. The door was then unlocked, and Wilson and his companions went into the garden, taking the watchman with them.

XIII.

IN THE GARDEN.

WE must now return to Law. On entering the garden, which was of some size, and very tastefully laid out, comprehending several fine trees, he made his way towards an alcove, situated on one side of a broad, smooth-shaven lawn, soft to the foot as velvet, and running up to the windows of the house.

No one was within the little building, so he sat down on a chair with which it was provided, and beguiled his impatience as he best could. He had not, however, to wait long. A slight sound caused by the opening of a glass door communicating with the garden informed him that she he expected was coming forth from the house; and the next moment a female figure, robed in white, could be seen flitting quickly and with noiseless footsteps across the lawn.

"Are you there?" inquired a soft voice, as the lady approached the alcove.

Law made no answer, but rose up and clasped her to his breast.

"I can't stay many minutes with you," she said, disengaging herself from his embrace. "But I have something of importance to say to you. Mr. Wilson has been in a very ill humour to-night, and evidently meditates a quarrel with you."

"Oh! that is of no consequence," rejoined Law, with a laugh. "Probably, some reports of my nocturnal visits have reached him, and aroused his jealousy. But, as you know, I can speedily tranquillise him."

"Of course, by avowing the truth, and letting him into our secret," responded the lady; "but he provoked me excessively by the malicious things he said of you."

"Why heed them, sweetheart, when you know they

arise from jealousy? He will unsay them all when he learns the truth."

"But he called you a rake, and I don't like such a term to be applied to you."

"Yet it is not to be wondered at that he should so style me, if he supposes me enamoured of his wife. I'll answer for it he will retract all he has said when he learns we are secretly married."

"Hush! not so loud—some one may overhear you."

"No matter if I am overheard. I am impatient for the disclosure. Some unpleasant consequences are sure to arise if the avowal is longer delayed. I have reason to suspect that my secret visits to you have been observed, and have given rise to reports prejudicial to Belinda's reputation. The world must know that the visits have been paid to my wife; and it must also know why we have been privately married."

"In that case I must give up all the property settled upon me by my first husband," said Lady Kate. "It is vexatious to throw away five thousand a year."

"But since the money can't be retained, you must make up your mind to part with it," rejoined Law. "Mr. Senor was a churl to deprive you of your money in case of a second marriage, but I am so pleased with him for leaving you to me, that I won't cast reproaches on his memory. As to the five thousand a year, it is a loss to be sure——"

"A loss! I think so!" interrupted Lady Kate. "It is an immense loss—an irreparable loss."

"Not quite irreparable," rejoined Law. "I will engage to provide you with double that income next year. Why, I have gained twenty thousand pounds within the last month, and if my luck only lasts—as it cannot fail—I shall gain as much next month. So you see we shall grow rich quickly."

"But how have you gained the money?—Tell me that?"

"By various successful speculations," he replied, with a laugh. "I can't enter into particulars at this moment.

But you may rest perfectly easy that you will sustain no material loss from the deprivation of your present income. In a week or two after the public acknowledgment of our marriage, we will go to Brussels, and thence to some of the German courts, where I shall offer my plan to their rulers. Failing there, we will proceed to Turin. Victor Amadeus, King of Sardinia, is almost certain to adopt the scheme."

"Before consenting to the disclosure of our marriage I must consult Belinda, since she advised the secret union," said Lady Kate. "I will go to her at once, and bring you word what she says."

"Oh! she will sanction the immediate avowal, I am sure, when she becomes aware of the necessity of the step," said Law. "Haste on your errand, and come back quickly. Bring Belinda's consent, and I shall be able to dispel her husband's jealous doubts, and announce proudly to all the world that Lady Catherine Knollys is now Lady Catherine Law."

Thus exhorted, the lady speeded towards the house.

At the very moment of her departure, Beau Wilson and those with him entered the garden, and Charlie Carrington, who was a little in advance of the others, called out,

"There she goes! She has just quitted her lover."

"Whom did you think you saw, sir?" demanded Wilson, too well aware that it could not be the hapless Belinda whom Carrington had beheld.

"Your wife, to be sure! who else could it be?" rejoined the other.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the old beau. "Your eyes must have deceived you."

"At all events, I saw a figure in white," returned the other. "I'll swear to that. But as this is the witching hour of night," he added, as the clock of the church in May Fair struck twelve, "it may have been a ghost."

Beau Wilson shuddered at the idea.

"Stay where you are, sir, if your courage fails you," said Charlie Carrington, noticing that the old beau

halted. "Sir Harry and I will see the adventure to an end."

"Come on!" exclaimed Wilson, rousing himself. "We shall find him in the alcove."

"The alcove! eh?" cried Carrington. "What a charming retreat for a pair of turtle-doves! Egad, Law is the luckiest of men."

"You won't say so five minutes hence, sir," rejoined the old beau, gnashing his teeth.

With this he hurried towards the alcove, and the others followed him.

Hearing their approach, Law came forth.

"Soh! we have found you, sir!" cried Wilson, in accents that sounded scarcely human.

"I can easily and satisfactorily explain the cause of my presence here, if you will permit me, Mr. Wilson," said Law.

"No explanation is needed, sir, and none will be accepted by me," rejoined Wilson, fiercely. "I know well enough why you are here, and so do these gentlemen. Draw and defend yourself," he added, flourishing his sword in the other's face.

"Hear what I have to say, my good sir," remonstrated Law. "I swear to you that you are entirely mistaken. I am here for no purpose at which you can possibly take offence."

"Will you give us your word of honour, Mr. Law," interposed Sir Harry, "that a lady—we won't mention any name—has not been with you in this alcove?"

"No, I can't do that," replied Law. "But I engage to clear away all suspicion, if you will only grant me a few minutes' delay."

"This is mere trifling," roared Wilson. "Put yourself on guard instantly, sir."

"Sir Harry, I appeal to you. This quarrel must not proceed," said Law, still refusing to draw. "I cannot—will not—cross swords with Mr. Wilson."

"Then I will stab you where you stand," cried the old beau, blind with rage.

"Hold, sir!" interposed Sir Harry, arresting him. "Mr. Law, I must tell you that you are bound to give Mr. Wilson satisfaction."

"Satisfaction for what?" cried Law. "I have done him no injury."

"Come, come, sir," cried Sir Harry, "this won't pass with us, after what we have heard——"

"And seen," added Carrington. "Sir Harry and I will take care you have fair play, Mr. Law, but fight you must."

"Ay, that he must, and quickly," cried the old beau, stamping the ground with rage. "I will suffer no further delay."

"Well, since there is no help for it, I comply," said Law, drawing. "But I announce beforehand that I shall merely act on the defensive."

"And I announce beforehand that I mean to kill you," rejoined Wilson. "So, have at your heart!"

Next moment they were engaged. The watchman held up his lantern, and its glimmer enabled them to discern each other's movements. But for this light they must have fought completely at hazard. The old beau's infuriated condition deprived him of his customary skill. He made several desperate lunges at his opponent, laying himself repeatedly open to a riposte, but Law contented himself with parrying the thrusts.

The conflict was proceeding in this way, when the glass door already alluded to was suddenly thrown open, and Lady Kate, followed by three or four lacqueys bearing lights, rushed forth, screaming, "Belinda is dead — poisoned by her husband!"

At this appalling cry both combatants stood still.

"What is this I hear?" said Law. "Belinda poisoned, and by you? If you are, indeed, guilty of this inhuman deed, you shall perish by the hangman's hand, not by mine."

"I will not die till I have had my full measure of revenge," cried Wilson.

And he again assailed Law, and with such fury, that

the latter, unable to act longer upon the defensive, made a thrust in return, and his sword passed through the madman's body.

At this fatal juncture Lady Kate rushed up, but recoiled with horror on seeing Wilson fall. Law, however, seized her by the hand, and drew her towards the dying man.

"Tell him," he said, "while he can yet hear you, that Belinda was innocent."

"She was!—she was!" cried Lady Kate. "She never wronged you."

"Why, then, did she meet Law here?" demanded the dying man, faintly.

"She never did meet him," rejoined Lady Kate. "It was I who came here—I, his wedded wife."

"What!—guiltless! and I have murdered her!" cried the old man, raising himself by a supreme effort. "Mercy!—mercy, Heaven!"

Then sinking backwards, he expired.

End of the Prologue.

BOOK I.—THE REGENT D'ORLÉANS.

I.

TEN YEARS OF TRAVEL.

THE ensuing ten years were spent by Mr. Law in foreign travel.

During the whole of this long period he wandered about the Continent, visiting the principal cities of Belgium, Holland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and France, and even meditating a journey to Russia, whither he was invited by the Czar, Ivan Alexiowitz.

His gains by play and speculation more than sufficed to maintain the extravagant mode of life he had adopted. Travelling en grand signeur with a host of attendants, he took up his abode in the most magnificent mansion he could hire in every city he stayed at, mingled with the highest society of the place, and gave brilliant entertainments. But though scattering gold abroad profusely with one hand, he was always receiving it with the other.

At each court where he was presented, he met with a distinguished reception, but could not induce any prince or potentate to adopt his financial scheme. While sojourning at Paris, however, he was sent for by the Duc d'Orléans, who, charmed by his graceful manners and eloquence, lent a ready ear to the explanation of his project.

The conjuncture seemed favourable for the experiment. The wasteful wars in which Louis XIV. had been engaged had emptied the treasury. Law undertook to replenish the royal coffers, to raise the public credit, which was all but annihilated, and at no remote period to pay off the national debt.

Dazzled by these splendid promises, the Duc d'Orléans

lost no time in communicating the plan to Desmarets, the comptroller-general of finance, who, driven almost to his wits' end to obtain money, was not indisposed to entertain the project, though he had no great faith in its feasibility. But when the minister proposed the plan to Louis XIV., the old and bigoted monarch peremptorily declined it, saying, that whatever benefits might accrue from the measure, he would have nothing to do with it, since it originated with a heretic.

The king's answer was reported to Law by the Duc d'Orléans, who, however, consoled him for his disappointment, saying, with much significance,

"Have a little patience, M. Law. I have not the same religious prejudices as my august uncle. In fact, I have no prejudices. If a plan has merit, I care not for the creed of its contriver. I like your scheme, and will adopt it if an opportunity arises. Again I bid you, wait."

Play was not then discountenanced as at present. The manners of the time encouraged the practice, and it was scarcely a reproach to say of a man that he was a gamester. At Paris there was more play than in any other capital in Europe. Princes and nobles indulged in the dangerous pastime. Even the Grand Monarque himself, the arbiter of all that was decorous, liked to see his courtiers hazard large stakes. During his residence in Paris, Law set up a faro-table, then a novelty in that city, at the house of Madame Duclos, a celebrated comic actress of the day, and occasionally officiated as tailleur. Owing to the attraction thus held out, the salons of La Duclos were nightly thronged by persons of the first rank, as well as by the most distinguished members of the various academies, wits, poets, philosophers, and men of science. Amid this brilliant assemblage which he had contrived to bring together, Law was conspicuous for his extreme courtesy of manner, high breeding, and evenness of temper. Whatever dispute arose—for disputes are unavoidable at play—he never lost his self-command, was never ruffled.

But Law did not restrict himself to his own faro-

table. He frequented other houses where gaming was carried on, and might often be seen at Poisson's in the Rue Dauphine, and at the Hôtel de Gesvres in the Rue des Poulies. At the two latter places the play being very high, our adventurer always came provided with a couple of large bags, containing a hundred thousand livres in gold. Moreover, to facilitate his operations at the tapis vert, he had great counters cast, each of the value of eighteen louis d'or.

Though nothing unfair in his mode of play could be detected — as indeed was impossible, since he always played fairly—yet, as he was invariably a winner, those who were heavy losers to him felt aggrieved, and representations being made by some of them to D'Argenson, lieutenant-general of police—a man of great severity and decision — that functionary ordered him to quit Paris within twenty-four hours, on the pretext that he was too well skilled in the games he had introduced into that capital.

Thus admonished, Law had no alternative but obedience. Before his departure, however, he obtained an interview with the Duc d'Orléans, who expressed his profound regret that he could not interfere in his behalf, as D'Argenson's order had been ratified by the king; but the prince assured Mr. Law that he did not believe a word that had been uttered to his disadvantage, and added, that Law might always calculate upon his favour and countenance.

"Once more I counsel you to wait!" concluded the prince. "A good time for both of us is at hand. Au revoir!"

Embarking at Havre, Law sailed from that port to Genoa, and, on arriving there, took a palace in the Strada Nuova. The wealthy Genoese soon discovered that an adept at play was among them, but they did not lose their money with more equanimity than the Parisians. Constant success at cards was unintelligible to them, and they refused to play with one whom they declared must be a conjuror or a cheat.

Warned by the authorities, though not before his pockets were well lined, Law was obliged to leave the city of Andrea Doria, and move on to Rome, where he spent the winter much to his satisfaction; and, on the opening of the Ridotto, which occurred at the commencement of the carnival, he added considerably to his funds, though continuing lavish in his expenditure as ever.

The Easter solemnities over, he proceeded to Florence. Here he became intimate with the Prince de Conti and the Prince de Vendôme, Grand Prior of France—the latter of whom, needy as well as dissolute, and in disgrace at his own court, cemented his friendship with Law by borrowing 10,000 scudi, which the lucky gamester had won overnight from the Marchese Strozzi. And we may add, that the debt was never repaid.

Venice was the next stage on which Law displayed his skill. The réunions which he gave at his palace on the Grand Canal yielded him as large profits as Genoa and Rome had done. At this time his acquisitions from play and fortunate speculations in various ways exceeded 100,000*l.*

And here, lest there should be any misapprehension on the subject, let us state emphatically that the suspicions of unfair play which constantly attached to Mr. Law, were wholly unfounded. He owed his success, as we have already shown, entirely to his skill, his powers of calculation, and perfect coolness. The Duc de Saint-Simon, who knew him intimately at a later date, and was not inclined to judge him too leniently, expressly exonerates him from the charge.

"The Sieur Law was a man of system, calculation, and comparison," says Saint-Simon, in his shrewd and accurate estimate of our adventurer's character, "and so skilful at play, that, without the slightest trickery, he could do that which appears incredible—win enormously, merely by force of combination at cards."

The almost octogenarian Louis XIV., who, it has been truly said, lived too long by fifteen years, still continuing to linger on, Law grew tired of waiting for his fall, and

accordingly repaired to Turin, where he was very graciously received by Victor Amadeus, King of Sardinia, to whom he proposed his system.

"It is a wonderful scheme," said the sagacious monarch, "but it will not suit me. You must try France. Only a bold financier like you can save that kingdom from utter ruin. When Louis XIV. drops, your opportunity will come. Meantime, amuse yourself here in Turin as well as you can."

Though the King of Sardinia declined Law's proposition, he nevertheless showed him much favour, and consulted him upon many occasions. During his stay at Turin, our adventurer set up a faro-table, as he had done at Paris, and by this means managed to add some 10,000*l.* more to his capital.

He was now wealthy enough to lead a life of luxury and ease, could he have been content; but, looking upon what he had hitherto done as nothing, he was more eager than ever to carry out his scheme.

At length, the long wished-for time arrived. The Grand Monarque yielded to the stroke of fate, and the Duc d'Orléans, who was fully prepared for the contingency, notwithstanding the feeble opposition of the Duc du Maine, guardian of the infant successor to the throne, and in defiance of the late king's will, caused himself, on September 2, 1715, to be declared Regent of France, with absolute power, during the minority of Louis XV., then only five years old.

Shortly after this event, Law transmitted to Paris the whole of his acquisitions, which then amounted, as shown by his own memorial to the Duc de Bourbon in 1724, to 1,600,000 livres, at 28 livres to the marc, or upwards of 110,000*l.* sterling. This done, he took leave of the King of Sardinia, who repeated his augury of success, and set out for the French capital.

On the way thither he was met by a courier charged with despatches from the Regent, inviting him to return to Paris, and assuring him of his royal highness's favour and protection.

Not many days after this, Law reached Paris, full of expectations, which were this time destined to be realised.

Having thus traced our adventurer's public career from his departure from London in 1705, to his arrival in Paris in 1715, we will glance at his domestic life during that period. It may be supposed that his fondness for play, and the dissipation in which he indulged, were little favourable to conjugal felicity, and such is undoubtedly the fact. Luckily for himself, however, he possessed a wife who really loved him, and who, though not blind to his faults, was willing to make large allowances for the temptations of various kinds to which he was necessarily exposed, to overlook his indiscretions, and give him full credit for his good qualities.

Moreover, there were now the strongest ties to bind them together. Two children, a girl and a boy, were the fruits of their union, the former of whom, now nearly nine years old, promised to be of rare beauty, blending in her features the best points of both her parents. Mary Catherine was a most fascinating child, sylph-like in figure, with tender blue eyes and light tresses, like her mother, and features modelled on those of her father. Her brother John, who was a year younger, likewise bore a marked resemblance to his sire, whose quickness, intelligence, good looks, and personal symmetry he inherited.

To these children Lady Catherine was devoted. During all her wanderings they had never been absent from her side, and their society had beguiled many an hour of solitude and tedium. Doubtless she would have preferred a different existence from that which circumstances compelled her to lead, but she ever accommodated herself to her husband's inclinations, and played her part admirably in the society among which she was thrown. Her distinguished appearance and manners, as well as rank, were of infinite service to Mr. Law during his stay at the various foreign courts.

Upon Lady Catherine's beauty the lapse of time had had no other effect than to improve it. After nine or ten years of married life she looked handsomer, because some-

what fuller in person, than when Law first beheld her. One more particular respecting her must not be omitted. Though ever willing to accompany her husband to court parties, balls, or other entertainments, she was never seen in the salons where he played, neither, we may add, though he did not interdict it, was her presence desired by Mr. Law at such times.

Law was not perceptibly aged. His lofty figure had lost none of its symmetry and grace, his features were handsome as ever, retaining the same freshness of tint and feminine delicacy by which they had been formerly distinguished; and his manners, always polished, had acquired an inexpressible charm from constant intercourse with the chief members of foreign courts. Moreover, his remarkable power of fascination had in no degree deserted him. He was still handsome, insinuating, captivating, resistless as ever.

It may be thought that the life of constant excitement which he had led, that late hours, some excesses, and habitual play, must have told upon a frame however vigorous; and if not detrimental to his constitution, must, at least, have impaired his good looks. But it was not so. At forty-four he was still in the full vigour of life—still, so to speak, a young man. Attaching as much importance as ever to external embellishment, he was still conspicuous for the elegance and richness of his attire.

How his breast swelled with pride and delight as he entered the vast hotel in the Place Vendôme, which had been hired for him by the confidential agent to whom he had transmitted his funds from Italy, and conducted Lady Catherine and their fair daughter and blooming son over the spacious and superbly-furnished salons! How elated he felt by the thought of the wonders he was about to achieve! Brilliant visions rose before him at that moment—many of which were realised—but he could not foresee the end!

Lady Catherine herself was equally delighted, and almost equally sanguine of the future. Tired of travel, she was enchanted to get back to Paris, the city of her

predilection. Having shared in her husband's disappointment at the constant rejection of his financial scheme, she was naturally overjoyed at the brilliant prospects now opening upon him—for with the Regent in his favour, what further obstacle could he encounter?—and she was also delighted that he was about to enter upon a career worthy of him.

Husband and wife often recalled in after days the feelings they experienced on the night of their return to Paris.

II.

THE REGENT AND THE ABBÉ DUBOIS.

BEFORE proceeding further, it may be necessary to offer a brief description of the Prince, who had lately seized the reins of government, and made himself absolute ruler of France.

There were many points of resemblance between Philippe Duc d'Orléans, nephew of Louis XIV., and our own Charles II.; but there were darker shades in the character of the Regent than in that of the English monarch. Like Charles, the Regent was gay, good humoured, witty, quick at repartee, corrupt, irreligious, and without faith in the honesty of man or woman. Like Charles, too, he was lavish of promises which he never meant to fulfil, but which were made with such semblance of sincerity that none could doubt them. Like the English monarch, also, he was magnanimous enough to forgive his enemies. When urged to punish those who had calumniated him during the late reign, he replied, nobly, "The Regent does not avenge the injuries of the Duc d'Orléans."

Philippe persuaded himself that he could read at a glance the character of any one presented to him, and he was frequently right. Endowed with a memory of sin-

gular tenacity, he never forgot what he read or heard. When quite young, he made a brilliant début in the career of arms under the Duc de Luxembourg at Steinkirk and Neuwinde, and there can be no doubt that if he had not been checked by the jealousy of his royal uncle, he would have won high military renown. Condemned, however, to inglorious ease, he contented himself with the life of a Sybarite. But, though sensual, he was not idle, and had a multitude of pursuits, and might, if he pleased, have been universally accomplished. His mother, Charlotte Elizabeth, Princess Palatine of Bavaria, a woman of great cleverness, said that on Philippe's birth the fairies were invited, and each gave him a talent. Unluckily, one malicious fairy, having been forgotten, came unasked, and said, "He shall have all the talents except that of making use of them."

Philippe was a painter, engraver, mechanician, and musician, furnished charming designs for the Daphnis and Chloe of Amyot, and composed an opera, which was played before the king and the court with much applause. He also devoted himself with great ardour to chemistry, and by his proficiency in that science drew upon himself the foulest suspicions. The sudden demise of the Dauphin, only son of Louis XIV., followed in the ensuing year by the equally sudden death of the Duc de Bourgogne, the king's grandson, who had become Dauphin, and who was shortly afterwards followed to the tomb by *his* eldest son, the Duc de Bretagne—these startling events aroused suspicion, which naturally fell upon the Duc d'Orléans, as the person most interested in the removal of those between him and the throne. Only a frail infant, the Duc d'Anjou, the king's great-grandson, was now left, and he was saved, it was thought, by an antidote administered by his gouvernante, the Duchesse de Ventadour.

In vain Philippe protested his innocence—in vain, he strove to defend himself from the cry of accusation raised against him by the public—in vain, he demanded an investigation; his denial was disbelieved, and the charge,

though unsubstantiated, left an ineffaceable stain upon his character. Maréchal, first surgeon to Louis XIV., while attempting to clear the prince from these terrible aspersions, lauded his great scientific attainments, observing to the king,

"Sire, if M. le Duc d'Orléans were a private person without fortune, he would have more than ten ways of earning a livelihood. Besides, he is the best man in the world."

"The best man!" exclaimed Louis. "Do you know what my nephew is? I will tell you in a word: C'est un fanfaron des crimes."

And if the king believed in his nephew's guilt, he did not judge him too harshly.

It has been asserted that retribution eventually overtook Philippe, and that he met his death while attempting to poison the young king by a cup of chocolate. Suspecting his design, an attendant, it is said, contrived to change the cups, and the Regent partook of the draught he had prepared for his royal charge. Such is the tale; but there is little reason to doubt that Philippe's sudden death, which took place at Versailles, was occasioned by a stroke of apoplexy.

But to resume. Regarded with suspicion and aversion by the king, who would fain have excluded him from the regency, exposed to the secret hostility of Madame de Maintenon and the Jesuits, shunned by the courtiers, and detested by the populace, who had more than once threatened his life, the Duc d'Orléans seemed to have little chance of obtaining the object of his ambition. Louis XIV. had legitimatised his two sons by Madame de Montespan, the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse, and now, by a codicil to his will, he constituted the Duc du Maine guardian of his infant successor, with the command of the household troops, and, in order to deprive his nephew of absolute power, appointed a Court of Regency.

But the Duc d'Orléans, though apparently indifferent, and immersed in sensuality, was secretly strengthening

himself, and preparing for the struggle. He had won over the Duc de Noailles, the Duc de Guiche, colonel of the French Guards, Reynolds, colonel of the Swiss Guards, the Maréchal de Villars, the Maréchal de Villeroi, and the Chancellor Voisin — the latter of whom disclosed to him the secret of the king's will.

On the day after the death of Louis XIV., when parliament met to decide upon the regency, the grand coup d'état was struck, measures having been taken to ensure its success.

The chief president of parliament, De Mesme, had been bought by the Duc du Maine, but the Duc de Guiche environed the palace with his men, the Swiss Guards under Reynolds lined the courts and vestibules, while the Abbé Dubois introduced Lord Stair, the English ambassador, into the lantern, to insinuate that the Court of Saint James's was favourable to the pretensions of the Duc d'Orléans.

Surrounded by his partisans, the Duc d'Orléans boldly declared that the Council of Regency, appointed by the late king's will, was contrary to the last words which he had heard pronounced by the dying monarch, and, imposing silence upon the Duc du Maine, who would have interrupted him, he declared himself Regent of France, with absolute power. Moved by his eloquence, and cajoled by his promises, the parliament concurred.

Thus the will of Louis XIV. was set aside, and the new Regent returned in triumph to the Palais Royal, amid the acclamations of the populace, who shortly before had hooted him as an assassin and a poisoner.

When Philippe subsequently went to Versailles to announce his triumph to his mother, she said to him,

"My son, I have one request to make of you. Give me your word that you will cease to employ the Abbé Dubois. He is the greatest knave on earth, and would sacrifice the state and you, without the slightest scruple, to his own interest."

Philippe readily gave the required pledge, but he did not keep it, as will be seen.

Perhaps the most discreditable feature in the conduct of the duke's supporters, was the conviction they secretly entertained that his assumption of the Regency was but a step towards supreme power, and that since he had found means to remove so many obstacles in his path to the throne he would have little difficulty in getting rid of the last frail bar. Some of them, no doubt, calculated beforehand upon the wages that connivance with this dark deed would produce.

The principal offices in the government were of course distributed by Philippe among his partisans. An important change had taken place in the form of the new administration. There were no secretaries of state as in the preceding reign. The mechanism of the new government consisted of six councils, the heads of each of which were members of the council-general of the regency, and brought up resolutions and reports. The Regent presided over the council-general, but being to a certain extent controlled by it, he could not exclaim with the same truth as his uncle, "L'état c'est moi!"

Philippe's personal favourites and the companions of his shameless orgies, whom he denominated his Roués, because he declared they would all consent to be broken on the wheel for him, while in the opinion of every decent person they richly deserved that punishment for their vices, were chosen entirely for their amusing qualities and utter indifference to decorum. Some of the more important of these were scattered among the various councils, others occupied posts in the household, but none of them had any real influence over the Regent. The chiefs of the Roués were the Ducs de Broglie, de Brancas, and Biron, with Canillac, cousin of the commandant of musketeers—four very handsome young men, but dreadful reprobates.

The most beautiful women of the Regent's court were unquestionably his three daughters, the Duchesse de Berri, the Duchesse de Chartres, and the Duchesse de Valois, the first of whom resided in queenly state at the Palais du Luxembourg, and exercised unbounded influence over her father.

But besides these three lovely princesses, whose levity of manners gave rise to infinite scandal, there were a host of titled dames of rare personal attractions, some of whom were supposed to share in Philippe's nocturnal orgies, while scarcely one of them escaped calumny.

In short, at the corrupt court of the Regent d'Orléans, where morality and decency were derided, and where vice reared her front unabashed, it would have been as difficult to find a woman of stainless repute as to discover an honest man. Since a comparison has been instituted between the Duc d'Orléans and Charles II., it would be unfair to our own monarch not to state that depths of depravity were sounded by Philippe from which Charles would have recoiled, and that the French court was incomparably more profligate than the English.

On assuming the regency, Philippe was only just turned forty, but he looked older, for his handsome features wore strong traces of the dissolute life he led. Moreover, owing to an injury he had sustained, he had almost lost the sight of one eye. Still, his countenance had an agreeable expression, and his manner was so affable as to set all who approached him at their ease. In his hours of conviviality, indeed, and in the society of his Roués, he threw off all etiquette and restraint, and appeared only as a boon companion. Even then, however, his natural grace and good breeding never entirely forsook him; neither when his heart was opened by wine could any state secret be wrested from him.

Our sketch would be incomplete without some allusion to the remarkable personage by whom the Regent was secretly governed, and by whose pernicious counsels his mind had been early corrupted.

The Abbé Dubois was the son of an apothecary at Brive, in Limousin, and being sent to Paris at an early age, he was lucky enough to get appointed preceptor to the Duc d'Orléans, then Duc de Chartres, and soon contrived to insinuate himself into the good opinion of the young prince. At this time he played a double part, and played it successfully. While instructing his royal pupil

with so much care as to enable him to pass his examinations with credit, he sought to ensure his own influence over him by ministering to his pleasures, and by these infamous means obtained an ascendancy over him, which he could never shake off.

The credit enjoyed by Dubois with the young duke did not escape the notice of Louis XIV., and that monarch confidentially employed the abbé to negotiate a marriage between Philippe and Mademoiselle de Blois, the king's daughter by Madame de Montespan. By the address of Dubois this match, on which Louis had set his heart, was accomplished in spite of the opposition of the prince's mother, and the abbé had the assurance to ask for a cardinal's hat as the reward of the service. Louis scouted the audacious request, but included his ally in Tallard's embassy to London, at which time the abbé, who then styled himself the Chevalier Dubois, made the acquaintance of Lord Stanhope, and many other eminent political personages.

The remarkable talent for intrigue possessed by Dubois began now to be developed. He had long nourished ambitious designs, and hoped by the aid of Philippe, now become Duc d'Orléans, to carry them into effect. Ostensibly acting as secretary, he was in reality director of the prince's household, his counsellor, and indeed governor, and though often in disgrace, owing to his insolence, he was never dismissed.

It was mainly owing to the abbé's adroit management that Philippe secured the regency. But when the arch intriguer claimed the reward of his services, Philippe, fully aware of the odium he would incur by appointing a person of such scandalous character to any post of importance, hesitated, and tried to put him off. Dubois, however, insisted, observing:

"Your highness is now all-powerful. Will you leave in inaction the man who has raised you?"

Yielding to his solicitations, the Regent named him councillor of state, giving great offence by the step to all those with whom the abbé was associated.

Though stained by vice, and without a single redeeming quality, Dubois was a person of great capacity, learned, well informed, and cunning in the highest degree. "He lied with so much effrontery," says Saint-Simon, "that even when caught in the fact he would deny it. His conversation," adds the same authority, "otherwise instructive, ornate, and agreeable, was tainted by a *fumée de fausseté*, that seemed to distil from his pores." He feigned to have an impediment in his speech in order to watch the person who addressed him, and gain time for reply. So wary was he, that he must have been a subtle antagonist who would take him at a disadvantage. Notwithstanding his nocturnal excesses Dubois was exceedingly industrious, rose early, and devoted the greater part of the day to business. His disposition, unlike that of the Regent, was vindictive; he cherished the recollection of past affronts and injuries, and when he at length attained the height of his ambition, and became cardinal and prime minister, he exiled all those who had offended him.

At the time of our history, the Abbé Dubois was on the verge of sixty. He was small of stature, with a slight frame shattered by debauchery. His features were exceedingly sharp, and stamped with cunning, and his keen eyes, long nose, and yellow hair, gave him a marked resemblance to a fox.

III.

THE REGENT'S CABINET.

On the morning after his arrival, Mr. Law repaired to the Palais Royal. In the vestibule were splendidly-accoutred officers of the French and Swiss Guards; in the gallery leading to the state apartments he encountered a host of silken pages and servitors bedecked with lace and embroidery; and in the ante-chamber, into which he was ushered, he found a throng of courtiers of all ranks and all ages, clad in habiliments of the richest stuffs, and of the gayest hues, for the mourning for the late king was already over.

At no period was costume richer or more becoming than during the Regency, when the known partiality of the Duc d'Orléans for splendid attire caused his courtiers to vie with each other in personal adornment. The voluminous perukes worn in the previous reign had not been discontinued even by the youngest galliard—probably, because the Regent himself liked the mode—but many slight changes had taken place in the fashion of the habiliments, so that an old courtier of the time of Louis XIV., who still adhered to his wonted attire, looked positively antiquated.

Very different was the behaviour of the assemblage from what it had been under similar circumstances during the late reign. Then all was gravity and decorum. No one spoke above a whisper, and a jest was seldom hazarded. But now there was no restraint whatever. Every one talked freely and laughed loudly at the numerous scandalous stories recounted by the Roués, many of which referred to the Regent himself, and these excited the greatest merriment. Affairs of gallantry were much more discussed by that profligate throng than affairs of state, and, in fact, formed the staple of conversation.

Each did as he listed, and some of the Roués, easily to be detected from the extreme elegance of their apparel, as well as from their dissipated looks, beguiled the time with cards and dice. De Broglie, De Brancas, Biron, and Canillac, were seated at a table, placed in the recess of a window, engaged at basset, as Law entered the ante-chamber.

After a brief detention, Law was conducted by an usher to the Regent's private cabinet—considerable surprise being manifested by all those who heard the summons.

The only person with the prince at the time was the Abbé Dubois. Philippe was reclining on a couch, and his countenance was flushed from the effects of the orgie he had indulged in overnight. But he brightened up on seeing Law, and gave him a most gracious reception.

"Ah, Sieur Law, welcome back to Paris!" he cried. "I was enchanted to hear of your arrival last night, and should have sent for you to a petit souper, if I hadn't fancied you might be fatigued with your long journey from Italy."

"Fatigued or not, I am ever at your royal highness's disposal," replied Law, with a bow.

"De Broglie and De Brancas were with me," said Philippe, "and you would have met two pretty actresses, Désirée and Zaire, besides the Marquise de Mouchy and Madame Tencin. The supper was exquisite, and served on a table volante—an invention of my own, which I flatter myself you will like—so we were secure from all interruption, and were it not for the infernal headache that troubles me," he added, pressing his fevered brow, "I should have a most delightful recollection of the evening. How much burgundy did I drink, drôle?" he added to Dubois. "You are sobriety itself, and can tell."

"I beg your highness not to appeal to me," replied the abbé. "I never recollect anything that occurs at one of your suppers, and care not even to be reminded that I have been a guest."

"Say you so, coquin? I will punish you by not in-

viting you to-night to the Luxembourg, where I mean to take the Sieur Law."

"I shall be thankful to be relieved," replied Dubois. "But perhaps your royal highness will deign to talk a little seriously. I know you have matters of importance to discuss with the Sieur Law."

"How can I talk seriously?" exclaimed Philippe. "My head is as frightfully confused as his late majesty's accounts, and as empty of ideas as his coffers are of coin. The only legacy the king has left us, M. Law, is a debt, which it will take us twenty years to defray, if we live upon nothing till it is discharged. Prithee, scélérat," he added to Dubois, "explain the state of our finances to the Sieur Law. The very thought gives me the nausea."

"And well it may," rejoined Dubois. "The Sieur Law will scarcely need be told that our finances are in a most deplorable state. The late king's balance-sheet shows a debt of three milliards four hundred and sixty millions, bearing an interest of eighty-six millions. We cannot even pay the interest of this enormous debt, since the excess of revenue above the ordinary expenditure is only nine millions. The people are taxed to the uttermost; public credit is gone, and trade well-nigh destroyed."

"A pleasant state of things, eh, M. Law?" observed the Regent, laughing. "All this we owe to my uncle's taste for war. On his death-bed he enjoined his great-grandson to maintain peace, and practise economy; and so we must, for we cannot pay our soldiers, and our revenues, as you see, are eaten up by creditors. Apparently, the debt must be expunged by a national bankruptcy."

"That must not be thought of for a moment," cried Law, quickly. "I will find a remedy. Now is the time to test the efficacy of my system. I pray your highness not to hesitate in its adoption."

"We can scarcely be worse off whatever plan we essay," returned the Regent, with a laugh. "Yours may serve as well as another."

"My plan will save the kingdom from ruin," said

Law, confidently ; "and my head shall answer for my failure."

"What say you to this, drôle?" said Philippe, appealing to his confidant. "Shall I do it?"

The abbé was seized with a fit of stammering, and could not immediately reply. Whereupon Law interposed.

"I pray your highness to hear me out," he said. "I ask for no pecuniary assistance. I only ask for your countenance. I have brought with me from Italy upwards of two millions of livres, which shall be devoted to the establishment of a Royal Bank. This will form the basis of my grand scheme, which, when in full operation, will astonish Europe by the changes it will effect in favour of France—changes greater than have been produced by the discovery of the Indies, or by the introduction of credit. By my instrumentality your highness shall be in a condition to raise your kingdom from the sad state to which it is reduced, and to render it more powerful than it has ever been; to establish order in the finances; remit imposts; encourage and increase agriculture, manufactures, and commerce; augment the general revenues of the kingdom; redeem useless and onerous charges; and pay off the debts of state without wronging the creditors."

"Bravo! bravissimo!" cried Philippe, clapping his hands joyfully. "What say you to this magnificent proposal, eh, drôle?" he added to Dubois.

"I am sorry it cannot be done," replied the abbé, coldly.

"Mort de ma vie!—but it *shall* be done!" exclaimed the Regent, springing to his feet. "Who shall say 'Nay,' if I enjoin it?"

"The chief of the council of finance — the Duc de Noailles," rejoined Dubois. "He can hinder you."

Law looked hard at the Regent, expecting him to gainsay this assertion, but, to his surprise, Philippe only gave utterance to an exclamation of anger, and flung himself upon the couch.

"You must get rid of Noailles before you can carry out the Sieur Law's plan," continued Dubois, fixing his keen eye upon the Regent. "With Villeroi you can do anything—with Noailles nothing. The pupil of Desmarets has his own expedients for re-establishing the finances, and will not allow an intruder into his administration."

"Any arbitrary measures which the Duc de Noailles may adopt will never enable your highness to discharge the national debt," said Law, "while they will inevitably increase the misery under which the kingdom now labours."

"True," replied Dubois; "but he must have a trial."

"I repeat, he will fail," said Law.

"So much the better for you," rejoined the abbé. "When he has been tried and found wanting, you will come in with additional effect."

At this moment an usher announced the Duc de Noailles and the Maréchal de Villeroi.

"Ah! here he is," cried Dubois. "Your highness can ascertain whether he will relish the scheme."

IV.

THE DUC DE NOAILLES AND THE MARÉCHAL DE VILLEROI.

THE Duc de Noailles, who now entered, was a tall, portly personage, of martial air and deportment. He was clad in rich military array, and wore a peruke à la brigadière—a wig ample in front, and turned up behind. The duke had figured in the late wars with Spain, and had obtained some unimportant victories, but he was but a mediocre general, lacking the coup d'œil of genius, and the power of bold and rapid execution that mark the great commander. Yet in liberating Languedoc from the descent made upon it by the English in the winter of 1709, he displayed energy and promptitude.

Speaking of him at the head of the army, Saint-Simon says, "that he harassed his troops by useless movements, by marches and counter-marches which none could understand, sometimes ordering the whole army to march and then suddenly to halt, driving the men to despair." In state affairs, he pursued the same course, would seize a project, follow it ardently for some days, and then lay it aside for another, which in its turn was abandoned. "He has always some new hobby," adds Saint-Simon, "some fresh fancy, and has no consecutive ideas except for plots, cabals, and snares, and is ever digging mines under our feet."

But though unstable, the Duc de Noailles was fond of business, and possessed extraordinary powers of application. Easy and agreeable in manner, though not profound, he talked well on most subjects. He was greedy and ambitious, and had made the post of prime minister the price of his defection from the Duc du Maine, but he accepted the presidency of the finances provisionally. The Regent disliked and distrusted him, but was obliged to yield to his demands. Dubois, however, resolved to

thwart the aim of the insatiate duke, and meditated his overthrow.

The old Maréchal de Villeroi, who came next, retained the costume of the former court, and was stiff and stately in carriage, and proud and pompous in manner. His incapacity as a general had been proved at Ramillies, where he was signally defeated by Marlborough; but ill success in the field did not deprive him of his royal master's favour.

Faithless to the sovereign who had loaded him with benefits, and who, when expiring, honoured him with marks of his confidence and esteem, Villeroi, finding his advances to the Duc du Maine coldly received, had the ingratitude and baseness to betray his trust for a place in the Council of Regency, coupled with the governorship of the infant king; and it was through his instrumentality that the Chancellor Voisin was induced, on certain conditions, to deliver up the codicil to the king's will, of which he was the depositary. The Maréchal de Villeroi was now chief of the council of finance, but he merely enjoyed the title without the power. The humiliating position in which he was placed by the superior abilities of Noailles, who took the lead in all discussions, and treated his opinions with ill-disguised contempt, made him detest his ambitious colleague, but, not possessing the talent to compete with him, he concealed his aversion under the mask of arrogance and indifference.

But though the Regent had fulfilled his part of the compact, and placed the imbecile old marshal in a position he was wholly unfit to occupy, the latter felt no gratitude, but, perfidious as ever, soon began secretly to plot with the Duc du Maine against his new master. Villeroi, however, was not the only one of the professed adherents of the Duc d'Orléans who was false to him. Many others were equally treacherous, and the Regent, whose penetration enabled him to fathom their designs, may be excused for the poor estimate he formed of mankind from the specimens brought under his immediate notice.

Though hating them both, the Regent received the two ministers with a warmth and appearance of regard that did infinite credit to his powers of dissimulation.

To the more perfidious of the pair, the old Maréchal de Villeroi, he was particularly attentive, and inquired with almost filial solicitude after his gout and bodily ailments. The veteran courtier, who, fatuous as he was, was not duped by these professions of regard, feigned to be deeply gratified by the Regent's consideration, and, while thanking him for his goodness, said that he had just come from Vincennes, where he had left his royal charge in the care of his gouvernante, the Duchesse de Ventadour.

"His majesty, I am sorry to say, is troubled with a slight cold," he observed; "but your highness need not feel the least uneasiness about him. We shall soon get rid of it. The duchess watches over him like a mother, and soothes him with the most delicate syrups and confections!"

"I know her affection for him," said the Regent. "But the most trifling ailment ought not to be disregarded. Too much care cannot be taken of the most precious life in the kingdom."

"Every care shall be taken of him—on that your highness may rely," said Villeroi, majestically.

"I have no doubt of it," remarked the Regent; "but I shall drive to Vincennes this morning to see his majesty."

"Perhaps it may be well to defer the visit for a day or two," said Villeroi, rather confused. "His majesty is a little peevish and fretful, and scolded even me when I approached to kiss his hand—ordering me out of his presence with an observation which I care not to repeat. Possibly he might refuse to see your highness."

"Especially if prompted to do so by his gouvernante," replied the Regent, laughing. "However, since you assure me there is nothing seriously the matter with him, I won't alarm the duchess by an unexpected visit. Ere long, I may have to hold another Lit de Justice, at which his majesty's presence will be necessary, and for that you will be prepared."

Then turning to Noailles, he said, "You have come at a moment when I am most anxious to consult you, M. le Duc. You have heard me speak in high terms of the financial talent of the Sieur Law. He is here—just returned from Italy."

"I am charmed to make the Sieur Law's acquaintance," said Noailles, bowing to him. "I have heard much of him."

"So have I," observed Villeroi, likewise honouring Law with a formal bow—"from the Prince de Conti—and I forget who else."

"Possibly the Duc du Maine, or the Comte de Toulouse," supplied the Regent. "Never mind whom. The Sieur Law has a great and deserved reputation."

"He has the reputation of great skill at play—that I perfectly remember," said Villeroi. "I have not forgotten the charming soirées we used to have at the salons of La Duclos, where we all lost our money at faro, nor the enormous golden counters, each worth eighteen louis d'or, which the Sieur Law placed on the table at Boisson's—ha! ha!"

"Your memory, I perceive, does not fail you, marshal; but M. Law has now more important matters on hand than play," said the Regent. "Aware of our financial difficulties, and desirous of alleviating them, he proposes the establishment of a Bank, on the principle of those already in operation in neighbouring kingdoms, to be administered in the king's name, and under royal authority. Such a bank he believes calculated to revive the credit of the country, and I confess I have full confidence in the project."

"I shall be glad to be made more fully acquainted with the Sieur Law's plan," said Noailles, looking keenly at him.

"The idea of the Royal Bank I design, M. le Duc," observed Law, "is to make it a receptacle for the state revenues, and in fact for all the metallic currency of the kingdom, which I propose to replace by bank-notes. I look upon the whole nation as a grand banking com-

pany, and I argue that if a bank may increase the issue of its notes beyond the amount possessed by it in bullion, without risking its solvency, a nation may act in the same manner with perfect security. Let me add, that the utility of paper-money is such that I am certain all the world will prefer it to specie."

"Paper-money has unquestionably two grand recommendations," observed the Regent—"convenience in payment and security in carriage."

"True, but it may be burnt, or lost, or abstracted, far more readily than gold or silver," said Noailles.

"If carried out, the Sieur Law's bank will upset the Duc de Noailles," whispered Dubois to Villeroi.

"Will it?" rejoined the old marshal, in the same tone. "Then I'll support it with all my heart." And he added, aloud, "I am lost in admiration of the Sieur Law's scheme. The whole nation a grand banking company! What a stupendous idea!"

"To me the plan of a Royal Bank appears fraught with considerable danger," said Noailles. "Failure, which I deem certain, would discredit the government, and plunge us into greater difficulties."

"I have no fear of such consequences," said the Regent. "I am so strongly in favour of the scheme, that I intend to summon a council extraordinary, to which the chief capitalists shall be invited, to deliberate upon the expediency of the measure."

"Precisely the course I was about to recommend to your highness," said Villeroi. "An extraordinary measure, such as the Royal Bank proposed by the Sieur Law, requires a council extraordinary to discuss it. But I announce beforehand my firm conviction, based upon your highness's expressed opinion, that the scheme will be found practicable, and if put into execution, will be attended with surprising results. The whole nation a grand banking company! Wonderful idea! I am amazed it never struck any of our financiers before."

"Had it done so, they would have rejected the notion as absurd," said Noailles, contemptuously.

At this moment the usher announced the Duc de Saint-Simon, and a little man, well made, splendidly attired, haughty in manner, with quick eyes, and a very sarcastic expression of countenance, entered the cabinet, and bowed ceremoniously to the Regent.

V.

THE DUC DE SAINT-SIMON.

MARMONTEL said of the Duc de Saint-Simon, and with perfect truth, "that in the nation he could only discern the nobility, in the nobility only the peerage, and in the peerage only himself." But, though proud as a Spanish hidalgo, a great stickler for the privileges of his order, and somewhat egotistical, Saint-Simon had no petty qualities. He was worthily distinguished in the Regent's corrupt court for perfect probity and uncontaminated morals. But his manner was very sarcastic, and made him many enemies, and he was obstinate, full of crotchets, and difficult to manage. He was a man of singular shrewdness and observation, and great ability, and to him, as is well known, we owe the inimitable Memoirs wherein are depicted in living colours the principal personages of the French court at the period.

After the death of the Duc de Bourgogne, Saint-Simon attached himself to the Duc d'Orléans, and never wavered in his loyalty to the latter, who constantly consulted him, and generally deferred to his judgment. On the establishment of the Regency, Saint-Simon at once rose to the highest point of favour, and might have been made governor of the young king, but he declined the post, observing to Philippe, "Some mishap may occur. Your highness is aware of the calumnies spread abroad by your enemies. They will say you placed me there—*for that purpose.*" The Regent shrugged his shoulders, and conferred the post upon Villeroi.

"Perhaps I am interrupting some financial discussion," said Saint-Simon, bowing to Noailles and Villeroi. "If so, I will retire."

"On no account," said the Regent. "It is true we are discussing an important plan proposed for our consideration by the Sieur Law, a Scottish financier whom I beg to present to you, and I shall be glad to have your opinion upon it."

"My opinion will be worth nothing," rejoined Saint-Simon. "I am wholly ignorant on financial matters, and, in fact, detest them. You have two ministers with you who are fully competent to advise you."

"But this is a question you will readily understand, M. le Duc," said the Regent, "and I must insist upon having your opinion. The Sieur Law undertakes to raise the kingdom from its present misery to the greatest prosperity, and to free the state from all pecuniary difficulties."

"The Sieur Law, I conclude, has discovered the philosopher's stone," observed Saint-Simon, dryly.

"He has discovered a magic word of equal potency," rejoined Philippe. "That word is Credit. By credit he engages to accomplish the beneficial changes I have mentioned."

"If that is all, the proposition is intelligible enough," said Saint-Simon. "Restore public credit, and the rest is easy. But how is that to be accomplished?"

"Ay, there is the question," remarked Noailles. "No one can deny that if public credit can be re-established, all our difficulties will disappear, but I do not see that this desideratum can be achieved by the Royal Bank proposed by the Sieur Law."

"A Royal Bank, eh?—that is the scheme!" cried Saint-Simon.

"The Sieur Law proposes to make the whole nation a grand banking company," said Villeroi. "A magnificent idea, eh, M. le Duc?"

"Very magnificent," echoed Saint-Simon.

"I won't weary you by detailing my scheme, M. le Duc," observed Law to Saint-Simon. "But I design to

represent the whole of the revenues of state and all funded property by bank-notes. In a word, to substitute paper-money for metallic currency—the advantages of which change I have demonstrated satisfactorily to his royal highness."

"The scheme is perfectly Utopian, and scarcely merits consideration," sneered Noailles.

"Hum! I am not so sure of that," observed Saint-Simon. "I have declared my ignorance of financial matters, and my opinion may be valueless, but it appears to me that when some means must be found of liquidating the heavy debt bequeathed to the state by the late king, this plan, chimerical as it appears, deserves at least consideration."

"Granting the utility of a Royal Bank," observed Noailles—"though I would not have it conducted upon the plan recommended by the Sieur Law—a season of general distress and distrust like the present is unfavourable for the experiment. Such a bank is not wanted, and if established, would not assist us in paying off the state debts. We must proceed slowly but surely—suppress all useless expenses—retrench in every department—and adopt the most energetic measures against all contractors, speculators, farmers of revenues, and others, who have enriched themselves at the cost of the state, and compel them to disgorge their illicit gains."

"Such measures will accomplish little," observed Saint-Simon. "Recollect what Sully said when he had made a like experiment and failed. 'Petty rascals only fall into the nets of justice: great thieves escape.'"

"The great thieves shall not escape me," said Noailles. "I shall ask his royal highness to appoint a commission of Visa to inquire into the claims of all state creditors; to verify the accounts; and annul all notes fraudulently emitted in the name of the government."

"I see no harm in such a commission, M. le Duc," said the Regent. "It shall be appointed."

"But this is merely a preliminary step," rejoined Noailles. "I shall require a Chamber of Justice, before

which all persons suspected of making fortunes by the scandalous means I have particularised, can be brought The tribunal must be clothed with power to punish such delinquents generally by heavy penalties, and, in extraordinary cases, by confiscation of property."

"Before granting the request, your highness should weigh the consequences of such vexatious proceedings," observed Saint-Simon. "The Duc de Noailles will perhaps inform you how many persons can be rendered amenable to the proposed tribunal, and what will be the result of its operations?"

"I calculate that we can lay hold of about six thousand offenders, from whom, at the least, we shall obtain twelve hundred millions," returned Noailles.

"And this is all you expect!" cried Law. "When you have got that sum, you will be just as unable to discharge the state debt as you are now, to say nothing of the popular odium you will most assuredly incur by measures so arbitrary and vexatious. The only fruit of the Chamber of Justice will be thousands of informations, true or false."

"I am not blind to the difficulties of the task," rejoined Noailles, "but I shall not shrink from them. There is no alternative but this, or a national bankruptcy."

"Yes, I have proposed one," said Law. "By the Royal Bank, which I have suggested, confidence will be inspired, the circulation re-established, and very speedily public credit will be restored—and this without harshness or injustice."

"I incline to think the Royal Bank ought to have a trial," said Saint-Simon.

"I am decidedly of that opinion," added Villeroi.

"You shall have the Visa and the Chamber of Justice you require, M. le Duc, provided you consent to the adoption of the Sieur Law's scheme," said the Regent.

"I can allow no interference," rejoined Noailles, peremptorily. "Your highness has confided the direction of the finances to me, and I must manage them as I deem

best. There must be no uncertainty in regard to this Royal Bank, and I must beg your highness to declare in precise terms that the notion shall be given up."

"You ask too much of his highness, M. le Duc," observed Saint-Simon.

"It is zeal for his highness's service that prompts me to ask it," rejoined Noailles.

"Let him have his way," whispered Dubois to the Regent. "His plans will ensure his own downfal."

"I am persuaded the bank ought to take place, M. le Duc," observed Philippe; "but since you are so strenuously opposed to it, I am content to forego the scheme —for the time at least. As to the efficacy of the measures you propose for the removal of our financial difficulties I offer no opinion, but you shall have the commission and the tribunal you demand."

"You are checked, but not beaten," said Dubois in a whisper to Law. "Victory will be yours in the end."

"I care not for myself," rejoined Law, "but for the Regent, whom I could at once relieve from all embarrassment, were I permitted. The plan proposed by the Duc de Noailles will only envenom the evil it professes to cure."

"Exactly so, and then a better physician will be called in," said Dubois.

"Sufficient time has been devoted to business," said the Regent, with a look of ennui. "Let us have chocolate. After the levée I will take you to the Luxembourg," he added to Law.

On this a silver bell set on the table was struck by the Abbé Dubois, and the summons was presently answered by a gentleman usher, accompanied by three tall valets in state liveries, bearing chocolate on silver salvers.

While the Regent and those with him were partaking of the refreshment, the doors were thrown open, and all the courtiers congregated in the ante-chamber flocked into the cabinet.

End of the First Book.

BOOK II.—COLOMBE.

I.

THE CHAMBER OF JUSTICE.

THE Duc de Noailles commenced his arbitrary measures for the reduction of the national debt by a recoinage, raising the louis d'or of fourteen livres to twenty, and the crown of three livres and ten sous to five livres, by which nefarious proceeding he calculated upon a profit of two hundred millions. Little more, however, than a quarter of that amount was realised, since a vast quantity of gold left the kingdom.

His next experiment was upon the public securities. All holders of public stocks, and bills for which the government was responsible, were enjoined to present them to a Commission of Visa. After rigorous examination, these notes were replaced by billets d'état, bearing an interest at four per cent.; but so enormous was the reduction, that a note previously worth a hundred francs was lowered to twenty.

A tribunal, armed with extraordinary powers, for the examination and punishment of fraudulent contractors and suspected peculators of public money, was next installed in the ancient convent of the Grands Augustins, situated on the quay of that name. Immediately upon the establishment of this formidable tribunal, several wealthy financiers were arrested, and conveyed to the Bastille, where they were imprisoned till they could be brought before the Chamber of Justice; and to prevent flight, postmasters were prohibited from furnishing horses and carriages to any person whatever. At the same time, all farmers of revenues were ordered, on pain of death, not to remove more than a league from their place of domicile. Every person who had realised profits, directly or indirectly, from affairs connected with the State for the

last twenty-seven years, was compelled to give an exact account of his dealings and acquisitions during that term, any false declaration entailing condemnation to the galleys, besides confiscation of property. Instruments of torture were kept in a chamber adjacent to the great hall in which the court was held, and these were frequently employed during the interrogatories of the accused. A premium was offered by the commissioners for denunciation. Servants were authorised to depose against their masters under fictitious names, and sons encouraged to denounce their fathers. The reward of this domestic treason was a fifth part of the property confiscated, with protection to the informer against his own creditors. But the commissioners went beyond this; and in order to popularise their proceedings, occasionally assigned a part of the property confiscated to the inhabitants of the district in which the luckless person had dwelt.

Terror and despair seized upon all capitalists, since no one possessed of money could now consider himself safe. Unable to quit Paris, they were almost prisoners in their own superb mansions. Wealth had become a crime, and its unfortunate possessor could not free himself even by surrender of his goods. It was a punishable offence to purchase furniture, pictures, goods, or silver plate, belonging to a suspected person. Many offenders were placed in the pillory, exposed to the insults of the mob, who, hating the wealthy, exulted in their punishment, and some few were hanged.

But as the operations of the Chamber of Justice extended, so did the terror inspired by it increase. Money was hidden; luxury ceased; and only the necessaries of life were purchased. Such was the dread inspired by the redoubtable tribunal, that some individuals, at the hazard of life, sought safety by flight. Others committed suicide. A considerable number purchased security by bribes. Large sums were secretly given to the favourites of the Regent for protection, and the courtiers soon began to turn their influence to account, offering their services to mitigate the punishment of the condemned, or procure remission of fines.

At the time when this atrocious system of spoliation was at its height, there dwelt in a large hotel in the Rue du Faubourg Saint Martin, a retired contractor, named Bernard Laborde. A few years ago, M. Laborde had been accounted rich, but, owing to the extravagance of his son Raoul, whose debts he had more than once paid, he was so reduced in circumstances that he was compelled to sell the greater part of his furniture with all his plate and valuables, and to discharge all his servants with the exception of a faithful old valet, who refused to leave him, and a femme de chambre, who attended upon his daughter, Colombe. He still continued to reside in his large mansion in the Faubourg Saint Martin, though the greater part of the rooms were unfurnished, and had lost all their former splendid decorations. Laborde's misfortunes being well known, he had not been summoned before the Chamber of Justice to render an account of his affairs, but he was in constant apprehension of a message, and every fresh case of spoliation that reached his ears filled him with dread. Rarely did he go forth at all, except into the garden connected with his house, which, once beautifully kept, was now grievously neglected.

His daughter, Colombe, was just eighteen. Magnificent black eyes, a clear olive skin, lips red as cherries and shaped like Cupid's bow, a delicately-formed nose, dark glossy tresses, and a slight but symmetrical figure, formed the sum of her personal attractions. Her disposition was gentle and affectionate, and though brought up in luxury she submitted to the change that had taken place in her father's circumstances with resignation and even cheerfulness. Not so Laborde: he was an altered man, always downcast and despondent.

In spite of the faults of her spendthrift brother Raoul, Colombe still retained a strong attachment for him, and, though he was forbidden the house, she sometimes received him in secret. Thus it happened, one night, when she was alone in a chamber which in brighter days had been her boudoir, and which even now was better furnished than any other room in the house, that her brother unexpectedly entered. Raoul Laborde was tall, well made,

and handsome, but his features had a rather equivocal expression. His habiliments were rich and of the newest mode. He was ushered into the room by his sister's attendant, Lisette. On seeing him, Colombe, with a half scream, sprang forward to embrace him.

"What brings you here, Raoul?" she said. "My father has not yet retired to rest, and may see you."

"No fear of that," replied Raoul. "Lisette has let me into the house by the garden, and will let me out in the same way. I have something very particular to say to you, Colombe."

"You may go, Lisette," said Colombe, "but stay outside to warn us in case my father should come hither."

"Mademoiselle shall be obeyed, but I don't think there is any fear of interruption," said Lisette, as she retired.

"Now, what have you got to say to me?" inquired Colombe. "I hope you are not come on the old errand. I have no money to give you—not even a solitary livre."

"You have guessed my purpose, darling Colombe," rejoined her brother, in a coaxing tone. "But if you have no money, you must have some jewel, some trinket, which I can turn into cash."

"I have already given you all my trinkets, except my diamond cross, and I cannot part with that, because it was my poor mother's gift," said Colombe.

"Parbleu! that diamond cross is the very thing. It is worth a hundred louis d'or. Come, let me have it, chuck. I am in a sad strait—I am, upon my honour. Were our poor mother living, she would desire you to help me in this way."

"Our dear mother doted on you, Raoul, and could refuse you nothing, but she would not have wished me to do this. Her gift is sacred, and shall never be thrown away at the gaming table."

"Well, lend it me to-night, and you shall have it back to-morrow. Tronchin, the jeweller in the Rue Richelieu, will lend me fifty pistoles on it, and with that sum I can win a hundred louis at play, and then I shall be set up again. Do lend it me, darling."

"But suppose you should lose, Raoul? No, I am resolute. I won't lend you the cross."

"Very well, then I shall do something desperate. Adieu! cruel sister."

"Oh, Raoul!" she cried, detaining him, "will you never stop in your fatal career? By your follies and extravagance you have ruined our father and broken our mother's heart. If you have any good feelings left, let me appeal to them. Do be warned, dear brother."

"You preach very prettily, sister," cried Raoul, impatiently; "but preaching won't get me out of my difficulties. If you won't help me my father must. I don't believe he is so poor as he pretends, Colombe. He could help me if he would. At all events, I must try him."

"I hope you won't force yourself into his presence, Raoul. You will cause him great pain, and will gain nothing by the attempt. Our father is very poor, and you have made him so."

"Well, well, I am determined to see him."

"You must not—indeed you must not, Raoul."

At this moment Lisette rushed into the room, exclaiming, "Mademoiselle, your father is at hand."

"I'm glad to hear it," cried Raoul. "This will afford me the opportunity I desire."

"You won't be so cruel—you won't trouble him thus," cried Colombe. "Hide yourself—quick! quick!"

"Go into this closet, sir," said Lisette, opening a door.

And as Raoul reluctantly complied, M. Laborde entered the room. Turned sixty, he looked seventy, had a meagre figure, sharp features, and restless glances betokening a mind ill at ease. Once tall and erect, he now stooped so much that his head was almost buried in his breast. Close behind him came his old servant, Delmace.

"I have bad news for you, my child," he said to Colombe. "M. Maurepas has been arrested to-day, and taken to the Bastille; and my poor friend Crozat, who was brought before the Chamber of Justice yesterday, and tortured to make him confess where he had hidden

his money, has been sentenced to the pillory. Alas! alas! we live in terrible times, when honest men can be thus infamously treated."

"You have no cause for apprehension, dear father," replied Colombe. "The Chamber of Justice won't meddle with you. Its prey must be wealthy."

"Very true," replied Laborde, nervously. "I am a ruined man, as all the world knows, but there are wretches who thrive in these ill times by lodging informations, and some such villain might falsely charge me with hiding money."

"But as the charge could not be substantiated, it would matter little," said his daughter.

"Still I should be interrogated," rejoined Laborde. "My asseverations might not be believed, and I should be put to the torture like poor Crozat."

"Don't alarm yourself needlessly, dear father," said Colombe. "No one is likely to inform against you. There can be no motive for such an act. Your poverty, I repeat, is your safeguard."

"Well, I will endeavour to shake off my apprehensions," rejoined her father; "but it is no easy task. I have had distress enough, Heaven knows! The cause of all my trouble, your graceless brother Raoul, I am told, has been presented at the Palais Royal, and has become one of the Regent's favourites. Like enough. Depravity is a recommendation at that profligate court. But I am puzzled to think by what disreputable means Raoul contrives to keep up appearances. No matter. He is no longer son of mine. I have cast him off for ever."

"Not for ever, dearest father," cried Colombe. "If he is really, as you say, a favourite with the Regent, he may rise to distinction."

"You know not what you talk about, child. He is more likely to sink to the lowest depths of infamy. And now mark me, Colombe. Raoul won't dare to enter my presence again, but should you accidentally meet him, I forbid you—peremptorily forbid you—to exchange a word with him. There is contamination in all the Regent's

Roués from which you should be free. Therefore, I charge you to avoid all intercourse with Raoul. And now, child, go to your chamber. I have some business to transact with Delmace."

"Before I go, permit me another word about Raoul."

"Not one," rejoined her father, in a decided tone.

"But, father, I was only going to say——"

"I cannot hear you," he interrupted. "Go, my child, and may you sleep sounder than I am likely to do!" So saying, he kissed her brow, and she retired with Lisette.

As soon as they were gone, Laborde threw himself into a chair, and covering his face with his hands, remained for a time a prey to bitter reflection. Old Delmace watched him anxiously, but did not disturb him.

During this interval, all being perfectly still in the room, Raoul cautiously opened the closet door, and peeped out. On seeing his father and Delmace, whose backs were towards him, he quickly drew back, but left the door slightly ajar, so as to enable him to hear what they said.

"Monsieur seems more dejected than usual to-night," observed Delmace to his master. "May I venture to ask the reason?"

"My anxiety springs from the old cause, the Chamber of Justice, Delmace," replied Laborde. "What a frightful position I should be in were any discovery made. But you will never betray the trust reposed in you You have sworn to maintain inviolable secresy."

"No oath was needed to bind me, sir," replied Delmace. "All the wealth of France should not tempt me to betray you. Rest assured I will never turn informer."

"I have entire confidence in you, my good Delmace," said his master; "and as you are the only person who knows that I have money hidden in this house, I ought to have no fear. But the numerous instances of domestic treachery and delation I have recently heard of are enough to inspire distrust."

"Monsieur does me great wrong if he has the slightest doubt of my fidelity," remarked Delmace, in a tone of reproach.

"Forgive me, my worthy friend, forgive me!" rejoined Laborde. "I know I could trust my life to you; and in fact, my liberty, if not my life, is in your hands. A word from you, and not only the hundred thousand livres which I have hidden in the cellar would be seized by the myrmidons of this accursed Chamber of Justice, but I myself should be severely punished—perhaps hanged."

"What is this I hear?" exclaimed Raoul, peeping cautiously forth. "A hundred thousand livres concealed in the cellar!"

"A fifth part of the sum secreted is the reward of the informer," pursued Laborde.

"Good! then twenty thousand livres shall be mine," mentally ejaculated his son.

"Why do you say this to me, sir?" cried Delmace. "You know it pains me to be suspected."

"But I do not suspect you, my good fellow—I do not suspect you. I know you to be proof against all temptation. I simply advert to the infamous practices of this abominable tribunal, which offers a premium for treachery. Were my worthless son aware that I had this secret hoard, he would infallibly betray me to obtain a share of it."

"You judge your worthless son correctly, sir," observed Raoul; "and you may rely upon it he won't disappoint your expectations. Within a few hours an officer of police with a dozen archers of the guard shall pay you a domiciliary visit. As soon as I can get out, I will fly to M. de Fourqueux to lay the information."

"Tell me, Delmace, do you think the cellar the safest spot in which to hide the money?" pursued Laborde.

"Where could monsieur find a safer?" rejoined the old servant.

"We must consider. Most of the secret hoards seized have been buried in vaults or gardens, so that the searchers always proceed direct to such places. A plank could easily be taken up from the floor of the grand salon, or a panel removed from the walls, so that the chest and bags containing the money might be secured."

"In my opinion, the chest and bags are quite safe where

they are, hidden beneath the central stone in the cellar," observed Delmace.

"Hush, hush! don't mention the exact spot, Delmace," cried Laborde, looking round uneasily. "Some one may overhear you."

"Some one *has* overheard him, and won't forget what he has heard," muttered Raoul.

"I tell you I feel an unaccountable uneasiness about the money," pursued Laborde, grasping the arm of his old servant, "and shall remove it from the cellar to-night. Where do you recommend me to hide it?"

"Poor old gentleman! misfortune has weakened his brain," thought Delmace. "It will be best to humour him. Well, sir, since you are uneasy, let us lock up the money in yonder closet. To-morrow we may find some spot where it may be better concealed."

"An excellent suggestion, Delmace," cried Laborde, springing to his feet. "Let us about it at once. Come with me to the cellar," he added, snatching up the candle and tottering out of the room, followed by his old servant.

As soon as they were gone Raoul emerged from the closet.

"A precious discovery I have made!" he exclaimed. "I always suspected my father had a secret hoard, but I never fancied the amount so great as a hundred thousand livres. I will denounce him at once. Yet hold! 'tis an execrable act I am about to commit—worse than robbery. Pshaw! the money is of no use to the miserly old hunks, since he daren't spend it, while to me it will be everything. What if I conceal myself in the house, and carry off the chest, or one of the money-bags they spoke of. No, that won't do. If caught, I should be sent to the galleys, whereas by pursuing the other course I shall be screened and rewarded, and, best of all, the denunciation can be made in a feigned name. So away with all foolish scruples. Plague on't! here they are again," he added, preparing to retreat to the closet. "No, 'tis only Colombe."

And at the word his sister entered the room.

"I am come to see you safely off, Raoul," she cried.

"My father and old Delmace have gone down to the cellar, so you need not fear meeting them. But I have a word to say before you go."

"Don't stop me now, darling," he interrupted. "I may be caught."

"I was only about to tell you, that if you will solemnly promise to return it, you shall have my diamond cross. Here it is."

"No, no, I won't take it. I feel it was wrong in me to ask it. I will find some other means of obtaining the money I want."

"Some honourable means, I hope, Raoul?" she said, arresting him.

"Honourable means, of course," he rejoined, hastily. "I tell you what, Colombe, if I am successful, as I hope to be, you shall have a thousand livres."

"You promise more than you can perform, I fear," she replied. "But how is this, sir? What new idea has crossed you? A few minutes ago you did not know which way to turn for money, and now you refuse my offer of the diamond cross, and offer me a thousand livres."

"A new plan has occurred to me while shut up in yonder closet," he replied. "Don't hinder me. I must put it into instant execution."

"I hope it is a plan of which I could approve, but I very much fear the contrary," she remarked. "Good night, Raoul! You'll find Lisette on the stairs."

II.

A VISIT FROM THE OFFICERS OF THE CHAMBER OF JUSTICE.

COLOMBE awaited Lisette's return, and then, satisfied that Raoul was gone, retired to her chamber. But feeling disinclined to sleep, instead of seeking her couch, she sat down to read, and remained thus occupied nearly two hours, when she awakened Lisette, who was slumbering in a fauteuil on the other side of the table.

"Ah! mademoiselle," exclaimed the soubrette, as she opened her eyes, "how cruel of you to disturb me at such a moment! You have roused me from the most delightful dream. Methought I was walking with Valentin in the gardens of Versailles——"

"Had I been aware of the agreeable nature of your dreams I would have let you sleep on," said Colombe. "But it is past midnight, and I ought to be in bed."

"It is not my fault, mademoiselle, that you have not been in bed long ago," observed Lisette, yawning.

"Everybody seems late to-night," remarked Colombe. "My father has not yet gone to his room."

"There is nothing singular in that, mademoiselle. My master does not sleep very well, and often sits up late with Delmace. Holy mother! what is that?" she exclaimed, as a loud knock was heard at the gate. "Who can be coming here at this time of night?"

"You had better go down and see who it is," said Colombe.

"If Delmace is still up he will go," replied Lisette, reluctantly. "Save us! there it is again," she added, as a still louder knock resounded through the house. "Folks who come at such an untimely hour shouldn't be in a hurry."

"I hope it is not a visit from the officers of the Chamber of Justice," cried Colombe, much alarmed. "They often search houses at night."

"Why should they come here, mademoiselle?" said Lisette, turning pale. "I'm sure they'll find nothing."

"I can't say," rejoined Colombe. "But I will go down stairs. Come with me, Lisette."

Ere they could reach the rez de chaussée, three loud strokes were dealt against the porte cochère, and in the court-yard they found M. Laborde and Delmace, both looking full of consternation. While father and daughter were exchanging anxious looks, but before a word passed between them, the gate was again struck thrice, and a loud authoritative voice called out, "Open the gate in the King's name!"

"It is a message from the Chamber of Justice!" exclaimed Laborde, in extremity of terror. "I am lost!"

"Put a bold face on it, sir," said Delmace to his master. "Your looks will excite suspicion. Shall I open the gate?"

"No—no—yes, yes!" cried Laborde. "Ask their business first."

On this old Delmace went to the gate, and opening a small grated wicket, reconnoitred the persons outside. The party consisted of an officer of police, and a dozen archers of the guard, two of whom carried torches.

"What do you want?" asked Delmace, in trembling tones.

"Instant admittance," was the reply. "Why do you detain us so long? Do you not perceive that I am an officer of police? Open the gate on peril of your life."

Thus admonished, Delmace was forced to comply, but while he was unfastening the porte cochère, Laborde retreated with his daughter to a room on the ground floor, where, half dead with terror, he awaited the appearance of the officers of justice. In another minute the exempt entered the room, attended by a couple of archers with drawn swords.

"What is the meaning of this nocturnal visit, sir?" inquired Laborde, summoning up all his resolution, though his quavering voice and trembling limbs betrayed his alarm.

"You will easily guess the purport of my visit, M. Laborde," replied the exempt—a tall, stern-looking man, with a harsh voice. "I am charged to arrest you and bring you before the Chamber of Justice."

"With what offence am I taxed, sir?" demanded Laborde, slightly recovering his self-possession.

"You are accused of hiding a large sum of money—no less than a hundred thousand livres—within your house," replied the exempt. "You perceive, sir, that my information is exact."

At these words Laborde staggered as if struck by a heavy blow, and sank groaning upon a chair. While solicitously attending to him, Colombe said to the officer,

"Do not misconstrue my poor father's manner, sir. His nervous system has been sadly shaken of late, and the slightest thing affects him. An enemy has denounced him, but the accusation is wholly unfounded. He has no money to hide. Search the house from top to bottom, and you will find it stripped of all its valuables and furniture."

"This tallies with our information, mademoiselle," replied the exempt. "We know that your father feigns to be poor in order to escape the fines and penalties imposed by the edict, but his cunning won't avail him. Hear me, M. Laborde," he added to him; "are you willing to deliver up this money, or must I look for it?"

"If you doubt what my daughter asserts, you can search the house, sir," replied Laborde. "But if you are unsuccessful, I presume I shall be liberated."

"In any case, I am commanded to bring you before the tribunal," said the exempt, "there to answer the interrogatories of the procureur-général, M. de Fourqueux. It might profit you to give up the money voluntarily, but as you decline this, we must search for it. You will all go with me. Show the way to the cellar, maraud," he added to Delmace.

Stealing a furtive glance at his master, the old servant complied, and conducted the party to the lower part of the house. Arrived at the cellar door, which was un-

fastened, the exempt took a torch from one of the archers, and stepped into the vaulted chamber.

He then instantly perceived that a flag had been taken up, leaving a deep hollow visible. Advancing the light, he found the hole was empty, and cried out to Laborde, who entered the cellar at that moment,

"Aha! you have been beforehand with us, I perceive, sir. The treasure has flown. What say you to this, mademoiselle?" he added to Colombe.

She made no reply, but appeared half stupified.

"Now, sir, will you tell us where to find the money?" added the exempt, turning to Laborde.

But the other made no response.

"We are wasting time here," cried the officer. "Conduct us to your young mistress's boudoir, drôle," he added to Delmace.

"Ah!" muttered Colombe, a terrible light flashing upon her. "Can Raoul have done this?—but no, no!—'tis too horrible."

Obliged to constrain her feelings, she accompanied the rest to the upper part of the house. On entering the boudoir, the exempt cast a glance around, and then marched direct to the closet, but, finding it locked, he demanded the key from Laborde, who gave it him with a sigh. The door being opened, the officer's investigations were rewarded by the discovery of a large box and a number of stout leathern bags, to all appearance full of money. These were thrown into a corner of the closet, and no attempt had been made to hide them. In fact, they had only just been brought there. By the direction of the officer, the chest and bags were taken out of the closet, and, being placed on a table in the middle of the room, were opened, and found full of golden pieces.

"There ought to be a hundred thousand livres here," remarked the exempt to Laborde. "Is that the amount?"

"It is—I cannot deny it," replied the unfortunate man. "But who has denounced me?"

"Address that question to the tribunal," said the exempt. "I can afford you no information."

"It is clear to me now," mentally exclaimed Colombe. "My wicked brother has done this—but I did not deem him capable of such villany."

The rest of the archers were then summoned, and the chest and money-bags given into their charge by the exempt.

"Will you take all?" cried Laborde, in an agony of distress. "Will you leave nothing for my child?"

"I must deliver the whole of the money to the procureur-général," replied the exempt. "You and your servant, Delmace, will be taken to the Conciergerie to-night, and to-morrow you will both be brought before the tribunal. Bid farewell to your daughter."

After tenderly embracing Colombe, and consigning her in a half-fainting state to the care of Lisette, Laborde told the exempt he was ready to attend him. He and old Delmace were then taken to the Conciergerie, and locked up for the night.

III.

THE PILORI DES HALLES.

NEXT day the two prisoners were brought before the dread tribunal.

Sharply questioned by the judge as to whether he had any further sums of money concealed, and threatened with torture if he did not make full confession, Laborde could only protest that he had declared the truth. Delmace was next interrogated, and told if he gave such information as would lead to the discovery of any further secret hoard, he would not only be liberated, but rewarded. The old man, however, looking steadily at the judge, said he would not utter a word to criminate his master. On this, he was taken to the adjoining chamber, where the thumbscrew was put on, but he bore the application with

great fortitude, and as nothing could be elicited, he was at length brought back to the court.

Sentence was then pronounced upon both offenders. The whole of the money concealed by Laborde was declared to be forfeited to the State, and for the high misdemeanour he had committed he was condemned to be set thrice in the pillory, and sent to the galleys for life. Delmace was likewise sentenced to the pillory, but there his punishment was to end.

On the following day, the first part of this rigorous sentence was carried into effect. Stripped to the shirt, with ropes round their necks, lighted candles in their bound hands, the two miserable men were attached to a tumbrel. On the back of each hung a label, inscribed, "Robber of the People." In this wretched condition they were dragged through the streets, amid the hootings of the rabble, to the Pilori des Halles—an octangular turret, built of stone, and having a tall pointed roof, which stood on one side of the picturesque old market-place. At each angle of the structure was a lofty unglazed window, so that a large horizontal wheel, turning upon a pivot, could be distinctly seen inside. Within the bands of this revolving wheel, which in fact formed the pillory, were holes destined to receive the head and hands of the sufferers. Fixed to this machine, in the painful and degrading position alluded to, poor Laborde and his faithful servant were exposed for several hours to the insults and outrages of the mob, who pelted them incessantly with mud, rotten eggs, and other missiles.

Amidst the large concourse collected on that day in the Place des Halles, there was only one person who felt any sympathy for the sufferers, and who was shocked and disgusted at the spectacle. This was a young Englishman of two-and-twenty, and of very distinguished appearance, who had but recently arrived in Paris, and not sharing in the popular prejudices, thought the sufferers were unjustly punished, and felt exceedingly indignant at the brutality with which they were treated by the rabble.

He was about to quit the spot, and was trying to ex-

tricate himself from a group of market-women, several of whom had the aspect as well as the tongues of furies, when he was detained by a disturbance among the crowd, caused by a young damsel, who was trying to force her way towards the pillory. With this beautiful but distracted-looking creature, whose looks and attire bespoke a condition far superior to the mass of the assemblage, was a female attendant, who vainly strove to hold her back. It is scarcely necessary to say that the unhappy girl was Colombe Laborde.

"I will go to him—I will go to my father," she shrieked.

"Where is your father, mam'zelle?" demanded a Dame de la Halle, with a very repulsive countenance.

"There!—there!" replied Colombe, pointing towards the pillory.

"What, that vile miscreant—that robber!" cried the virago. "You shan't go near him. Leave him to us."

And she hurled a heavy missile at the unfortunate Laborde, which, hitting him on the head, cut open his temple. Her companions laughed loudly, and applauded her skill.

"I never miss my mark," said the woman. "You shall see me hit the wretch again when the wheel comes round."

"Oh, spare him—in pity spare him!" cried Colombe. "He has committed no crime."

"Do you call robbing the public no crime?" rejoined the woman. "I and my commères think differently. We deem the pillory too slight a punishment for such as he."

"Ay, but there is worse in store for him—he is to be sent to the galleys," observed one of her gossips, with an atrocious laugh.

Hearing all that passed, greatly struck by Colombe's beauty, and alarmed for her safety, the young Englishman, to whom we have alluded, pushed towards her through the crowd. Though, as we have intimated, he had not been long in France, he spoke the language fluently.

"This is no place for you, mademoiselle," he said. "Let me conduct you hence."

But she heeded not the offer, and did not even seem to perceive the speaker, in her anxiety to prevent further outrage to her father. So imploring and agonised were her looks that the horrible woman near her could not resist them, but let drop the brickbat she was about to hurl at the poor wretch in the pillory, saying,

"For your sake, mam'zelle, I will spare him."

"Oh, thank you! thank you for your goodness," cried Colombe, seizing the woman's rough hand and pressing it to her lips.

"You had better take this young gentleman's advice, and go away, mam'zelle," said the woman. "You can do no good here."

But the unhappy girl refused to listen to counsel.

At this juncture the wheel of the pillory ceased to revolve, and after some little delay the two sufferers were released, and brought down to the tumbrel, to which they were attached as before. A passage was then cleared by the guard with their halberds, and the vehicle put in motion.

Owing to this stir, the crowd became so densely packed, that it would have been impossible for Colombe, had she attempted it, to withdraw, but she kept her place, which was now just behind the front rank of the line through which the sad procession took its course. In another moment the tumbrel came on. Bleeding, barefooted, and covered with mud and filth, the two prisoners presented a spectacle that might have moved a heart of stone; but their miserable plight did not save them from the mob, who greeted them with groans and execrations, offering them every kind of indignity.

Poor Laborde, who was on the side of the cart nearest his daughter, walked with head bowed down. As he approached, unable to restrain herself, Colombe called out in a voice distinctly heard above the yells and vociferations of the rabble,

"Father! father!"

Raising his head quickly, the unfortunate man looked in the direction whence the cry arose, and, descrying her, exclaimed in a lamentable voice,

"My child! my child! what do you do here?"

A piercing scream burst on his ears, and he beheld his daughter fall back insensible into the arms of a tall young man behind her; but he heard and saw nothing more, for the tumbrel halted not, and the guard ordered him to move on.

IV.

EVELYN HARCOURT.

As soon as the prisoners were gone the crowd began to disperse, and the young Englishman, followed by Lisette, bore his lovely burden into the Rue des Prêcheurs, where, finding an unoccupied bench near a druggist's shop, he placed her upon it, and left her to the care of her attendant, while he himself entered the shop in quest of some restorative.

On his return he was glad to find she had regained sensibility, and he induced her to swallow a few drops of the cordial he had procured. At first she did not know what had happened, or where she was, but, glancing round with terror, said to Lisette,

"Have I been dreaming?" Then, without waiting for a reply, she added, "Ah, no, the frightful scene was real."

A flood of tears somewhat relieved her, and she arose; but she evidently overrated her strength, for she could scarcely stand without support.

"Can I be of any further service to you, mademoiselle?" said the young Englishman, who still lingered, unable to tear himself away. "If I might venture to do so, I would ask permission to see you safely home."

"You are still very weak and faint, Mademoiselle Colombe," observed Lisette. "Let me advise you to accept the young gentleman's obliging offer—although he is a

stranger. He has already been of great assistance in carrying you out of the crowd."

A slight flush suffused Colombe's pale cheeks as she tendered her thanks to the young man, and, prepossessed by his amiable manner and looks she no longer hesitated, but took his proffered arm. Threading a narrow street, they gained the Rue Saint Martin, and proceeded along it towards the faubourg of the same name.

Their pace was necessarily slow, and as they went on the young man, who already felt a strong interest for the unhappy girl, acquainted her with his name and station—telling her he was a cadet of a noble English family, and that his name was Evelyn Harcourt; adding, that he had recently come to Paris to act as secretary to Lord Stair, the English ambassador.

In return for this confidence, Colombe gave him full particulars of the dire calamity that had befallen her father.

"If he has to endure another such frightful ordeal as he has gone through to-day," she said, in conclusion, "I am certain he will not survive it. What can be done to save him? How can I procure his pardon? But I forget I am addressing a stranger, who can feel little interest in my affliction."

"There you are wrong, mademoiselle," replied Evelyn. "I feel the liveliest sympathy for you, and promise you to use all the influence I possess to procure some mitigation of your father's severe sentence. I will speak to Lord Stair, but my chief reliance is upon my friend M. Law, who is in great favour with the Regent."

"Oh! if you can prevail upon your friend to say a word in my father's behalf, the Regent, no doubt, will listen to him. I know the Sieur Law by reputation. My father has often spoken of him as a great financier."

"M. Law is a kind-hearted man as well as a great financier," replied Evelyn. "I will apply to him without delay. But have you no powerful friend—no kinsman who can help you?"

"All our friends have deserted us," replied Colombe, sorrowfully.

"Then you have no brother?" cried Evelyn.

"Alas! yes," she replied, hanging her head. "But he is the cause of all this misery. His extravagance, I believe, caused my father to hide his money, and led to these fatal consequences."

"Where is your brother now, mademoiselle?"

"He is in Paris, but I know not where he dwells. I heard that he has become a favourite of the Regent."

"A favourite of the Regent!" exclaimed Harcourt. "Then your father is saved."

"Alas! sir, you do not know my brother Raoul," she replied. "If my unfortunate father has only to rely on him, he is lost."

Pained by what he heard, Harcourt remained silent, and nothing more passed between them till they reached the Rue du Faubourg Saint Martin.

"There is the house once occupied by my father," said Colombe, pointing it out, "and which still affords me shelter, though it will not do so long, for it has been seized upon by the officers of the Chamber of Justice."

Before Harcourt could make any reply, a tall, splendidly attired, handsome young man issued from the open gateway. On seeing Colombe, he hastened towards her.

"Ah! good day, sister," he cried. "I have been looking for you, and learnt that you had gone out with Lisette."

"I have been to the Place des Halles, Raoul," she replied, coldly; "and this gentleman, M. Evelyn Harcourt, has been kind enough—compassionate enough, I ought to say—to bring me home."

"I am infinitely obliged by M. Harcourt's attention," replied Raoul, with affected indifference. "I think I have seen him before. You are an Englishman, sir, if I mistake not."

"You are right, sir," rejoined the other, rather stiffly. "I have the honour to be attached to the English embassy."

"I now recollect you perfectly," replied Raoul. "I saw you yesterday with Milord Stair and the Sieur Law. Enchanted to make your acquaintance, M. Harcourt."

And he held out his hand, which the other haughtily declined to take.

Reddening with anger, Raoul seemed half inclined to resent the affront, when his sister interposed, and said, "You forget, Raoul, that we have just come from the Place des Halles. Had you been there, and witnessed the harrowing spectacle I beheld, you would feel crushed and degraded. Do you comprehend what I say to you, Raoul?" she continued, as he averted his gaze from her, and strove to conceal his annoyance by twisting his handsome moustaches. "I saw our poor father set in the pillory in the Place des Halles. I saw him wounded, bleeding, pelted, reviled by the rabble, and my heart is well-nigh broken with shame and grief. And who has caused this infamous punishment to be inflicted upon him? Who has brought him to the pillory? Who will send him to the galleys?—You!—his son! Oh! shame —shame upon you!"

"What mean you by this preposterous accusation?" cried Raoul. "Distress has turned your brain. You rave."

"No, I do not rave. I speak the truth, Raoul. I charge you with denouncing your father to the Chamber of Justice."

"Nonsense!—why do you charge me with the act?" he demanded.

"No one but you could have done it," she rejoined. "Old Delmace, who alone was in my father's confidence, is a fellow-sufferer with him, and would have died rather than be guilty of such perfidy. But you—unnatural son that you are!—did not hesitate."

"Upon my soul you wrong me, Colombe. I knew nothing of our father's arrest, or of the sentence passed upon him, till I came hither."

"It is false," she replied. "My father was arrested within a few hours after your last visit to me, when, by means best known to yourself, you discovered that he had money concealed. But tremble! The offence you have committed, which is black as parricide, will not pass unpunished."

"I will not stay to be railed at thus, even by a sister," said Raoul, losing patience. "Yet let me state my errand before I go. I came with money for you. Here it is," he added, offering her a purse.

"I will have none of it," she rejoined, with an expression of loathing. "It is the price of a father's blood. Hear me, Raoul. If you are not utterly hardened—if you are not dead to all sense of shame, and devoid of all filial duty, you will strive to make reparation for the dreadful crime you have committed, and procure the commutation of your father's unjust sentence. Do this!—save him from a repetition of the barbarous and degrading punishment he has this day experienced—save him from the galleys—restore him to home and freedom—do this, I say, and I will forgive and bless you. But shrink from it—fail in the task—and never call me sister more."

"I will do all I can, but I fear the attempt will be in vain," replied Raoul. "I excuse what you have just said, but I recommend you to be more cautious in the language you employ towards me in future."

"I but speak the truth, Raoul, and you know it," she rejoined.

"Truth cannot always be spoken with impunity in these days," he retorted. "You believe that I have denounced my father, and you bitterly upbraid me. Are you aware that to reproach a delator, as you deem me, is punishable by death?"

"Is it so?" cried Evelyn Harcourt, who had remained a deeply-interested spectator of this scene. "Then I shall render myself amenable to the punishment, M. Raoul Laborde, for I unhesitatingly pronounce your conduct to be infamous, and you may rest assured I shall make no secret of my opinion."

"Meddle not with me, M. Harcourt, or you will rue your rashness," retorted Raoul, touching the hilt of his rapier. "As I have just told my sister, I am content to overlook what has passed, but I shall not be equally tolerant in future."

So saying, he stalked haughtily away.

Evelyn looked after him with amazement mingled with disgust.

"Ah! mademoiselle," he said, turning to Colombe, "I am perplexed to think how one so good, so devoted, can have such an unworthy brother."

"I am still more perplexed to think how my father, who is the soul of honour, can have such an unworthy son," she replied. "Henceforward, I shall blush to own that I have a brother. Yet Raoul's nature was not always evil. He promised well in early years, but he has been corrupted by profligate associates, and has become what you see. Having once loved him tenderly, I find it difficult to steel my heart against him, but I must do so—unless he shall repent and amend. Farewell, M. Harcourt! I will not detain you longer. For all you have done—for all you promise to do—accept my fervent gratitude."

"Farewell, mademoiselle! I will not raise your expectations too highly lest I should disappoint them, but no effort on my part shall be spared to procure your father's liberation."

With this he bowed and departed. Colombe followed his retreating figure with wistful eyes, until he turned into the Rue Neuve d'Orléans, and disappeared. She then entered the gateway with Lisette.

V.

M. D'ARGENSON.

On quitting Colombe, the first step taken by Evelyn Harcourt was to repair to Mr. Law's residence in the Placé Vendôme, but, being unsuccessful in obtaining the interview he desired, he proceeded to the hotel of the English embassy. Unluckily, Lord Stair had gone to Versailles, so nothing could be done with him. Thus baffled, Harcourt addressed a long and earnest letter to Mr. Law, in which, after entering into full details of Laborde's case, he besought Law's intercession with the Regent in behalf of the unfortunate man. A few hours afterwards, Harcourt was gratified by receiving a kind and sympathising reply from Law, appointing an interview at noon on the following day.

Precisely at the hour appointed Harcourt appeared in the Place Vendôme. Beneath the peristyle of Mr. Law's magnificent hotel he found a splendid equipage, to which a pair of richly-caparisoned horses were attached, and while he was addressing the tall Suisse, who was standing with other lacqueys in the vestibule, Law himself made his appearance, and shaking him cordially by the hand, invited him to step into the carriage, and accompany him to the Palais Royal. Harcourt gratefully complied, and on the way Law said to him, "I have not been neglectful of poor Laborde. On receiving your letter I immediately put myself in communication with M. d'Argenson, lieutenant-general of the police, and by his means I trust to accomplish the object desired. I have also an advocate in reserve, who, if needed, shall appear—but not otherwise. Don't question me. I had rather not explain."

He then turned the conversation to other matters, and continued to chat gaily till they drove into the grand court of the Palais Royal, which was full of soldiers.

Entering the palace with his conductor, Evelyn attended him to the ante-chamber. There he stayed, while Law, who now enjoyed the privilege of immediate admission, proceeded to the Regent's private cabinet. As Evelyn glanced round the assemblage in search of some one to converse with, his eye alighted upon a knot of young nobles who were playing at faro at a table placed in a corner of the salon. The party consisted of De Broglie, De Brancas, Canillac, and Nocé; but there was a fifth person, in whom, to his surprise and indignation, he recognised Raoul Laborde. Almost doubting the evidence of his senses, he moved towards the table, and in so doing attracted Raoul's attention. Evelyn's unexpected appearance disturbed the gamester's calmness. He was making a cast at the moment, and, throwing badly, lost his stake. Shortly afterwards he arose from the table, and, approaching Harcourt, said, in a low, menacing tone, "What brings you here, sir?"

"You will learn anon," rejoined the other.

"I must know instantly," cried Raoul, fiercely. "Come with me into the gallery. This is no place for altercation."

"I decline to attend you, sir," rejoined Evelyn, sternly. "I have business here, and shall not stir till it is done. Return to the faro-table, and amuse yourself, while the father, whom you have denounced and robbed, is groaning in a dungeon, and the sister, whose heart you have well-nigh broken, is left to despair."

"No more of this, sir—on your life!" cried Raoul.

"I have done," rejoined Evelyn. "Go back to your friends. I will not interrupt you further."

Raoul looked irresolute, and was considering what course he should pursue, when an usher, bearing a wand, approached them, and, addressing Harcourt, told him that his presence was required in the Regent's private cabinet. Evelyn bowed, and was preparing to obey, when the usher turned to Raoul, and said, "M. Laborde, you, also, are summoned."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Raoul, uneasily. "What can his

highness want with me? However, I am ready to attend you."

Though conducted with the utmost quietude, this summons caused some surprise, and the young nobles at the faro-table laughed as they saw Raoul and Harcourt follow the usher out of the room.

In the cabinet with the Regent, besides Mr. Law and the Abbé Dubois, there was a tall, powerfully-built man of about sixty, with a remarkably stern and saturnine countenance. His habiliments were black, his peruke coal-black, his skin swarthy, his eyebrows black and bushy, his eyes black and piercing, and his nose long and hooked. Altogether, a very formidable-looking personage. And his looks accorded with his office, for he was no other than the lieutenant-general of police, M. d'Argenson.

It was not without considerable misgiving that Raoul felt himself exposed to D'Argenson's searching glance; neither was Evelyn Harcourt without a certain amount of uneasiness when subjected to a similar scrutiny. There was something magnetic in D'Argenson's terrible eye, and few could resist its influence.

The Regent affably acknowledged Harcourt's salutation as the young man was ushered into the cabinet, but scarcely deigned to notice Raoul's profound reverence, from which the latter drew an unfavourable augury.

"Monsieur Raoul Laborde," said the Regent to him, "representations have been made to me in behalf of your father, who has been condemned by the Chamber of Justice for secreting his money, and I am inclined to give the case consideration."

"I am very glad to hear it, monseigneur," replied Raoul. "I did not dare personally to plead my poor father's cause with your highness——"

"Bah!" interrupted the Regent, impatiently, "your father might remain to eternity at the galleys for any effort you would make for his liberation. Have you any idea by whom he was denounced?"

"I have not thought it needful to make inquiries on the subject, monseigneur, because I am aware that ac-

cusations are constantly made in fictitious names," replied Raoul.

"Under what name was information laid against the elder Laborde?" demanded the Regent of the lieutenant of police.

"Under that of Jean Pierre Chaillon," replied D'Argenson.

"Have you reason to believe it an assumed name?" asked the Regent.

"The name was assumed, monseigneur."

"Is the person known to you?" demanded the Regent.

"I know him perfectly," replied D'Argenson, fixing his eye upon Raoul; "but your highness will excuse me from pointing him out."

The Regent then turned to Evelyn, and said,

"I understand, M. Harcourt, that you have some statement to make in reference to this affair. If so, I am ready to hear it."

"While thanking your highness for the gracious permission," said Evelyn, "I am scarcely able to take advantage of it. All I can state refers merely to the daughter of the unfortunate Laborde, whom I chanced to meet yesterday in the Place des Halles, under very distressing circumstances, and from whose own lips I subsequently learnt the particulars of her father's case. If my sympathies were awakened for him by this recital, abhorrence for his unnatural denouncer was excited in a yet more forcible degree."

"Take heed what you say, M. Harcourt," cried Raoul. "It is forbidden, on pain of death, to speak in disparagement of a delator to the Chamber of Justice."

"Soh! you admit, then, that you have denounced your father?" rejoined Evelyn.

"I admit nothing," said Raoul. "I simply give you a caution. M. d'Argenson will tell you that by this tribunal a servant is invited to inform against his master, and a son against his father. Is it not so, sir?" he added to the lieutenant of police.

D'Argenson answered briefly in the affirmative.

"It is not for me to offer an opinion upon the necessity of such proceedings," observed Harcourt, "but I cannot bring myself to describe them in other terms than as revolting to human nature; while at any hazard to myself I must express my abhorrence of the conduct of a son who could betray his father."

"It is lucky for you, sir, that M. Raoul Laborde does not own he is such a son," remarked the Regent, "or you might be brought before the Chamber of Justice. As a stranger, I excuse you, but it will be well for you to bear in mind for the future that liberty of speech is not so great here as in your own country, and, however praiseworthy your sentiments may be, it is sometimes imprudent to give utterance to them. As regards the elder Laborde, I must say that, though I undoubtedly commiserate him, I do not feel inclined to yield to the solicitations made to me for a remission of his sentence."

"Your highness would not say so if you could behold his daughter, Colombe, and hear her plead for him," said Harcourt.

"I cannot tell what effect she might have upon me," said the Regent. "But in her absence I am immovable."

"Then we must have recourse to beauty, since beauty alone can melt you," said Law. "Mademoiselle Laborde is without, and only awaits your highness's permission to appear."

The Regent looked surprised, but not displeased by the information.

"I trust I shall not incur your highness's displeasure by confessing that I have caused her to be brought here," remarked Law. "She is now in the small ante oom."

"Let her come in," cried the Regent.

Law went to a side-door, and passing into a small ad joining chamber, communicating with a private staircase, and reserved for those who were allowed a private interview with the Regent, he presently returned, leading Colombe by the hand. Dark habiliments of plain material and simple fashion displayed her faultless figure to advantage; and though her features bore traces of the suffering

she had undergone, they had lost nothing of their wondrous beauty. Arising on her entrance, the Regent advanced a step towards her, and would have raised her as she threw herself at his feet, but she would not quit her kneeling posture.

"I will not affect ignorance of the object of your visit, mademoiselle," he said, in kind and encouraging accents. "You have come to me to solicit grace for your father. Is it not so?"

"Such is, indeed, my errand, monseigneur," she rejoined. "I implore compassion for him. I will not attempt to vindicate his conduct. He was culpable in concealing his money, but he has already been severely punished for the offence by the confiscation of his property, and by a degradation which to him must be worse than death, and which I cannot think of without feelings of shame and horror. Save him, I implore your highness, from a repetition of this horrible punishment, which, perchance, he may not survive, and if he should, it will only be to linger out his days among felons and malefactors. Be merciful to him. Spare him for my sake, for if his cruel sentence be fully carried out, I shall die of grief and despair."

"Nay, that shall never be, if I can hinder it," said the Regent, in accents of mingled kindness and gallantry. "Rise, mademoiselle. Your petition is granted. Your father shall be spared further punishment. I will sign an order for his immediate liberation, together with that of his servant. I cannot enjoin restitution of his property, for that is forfeited to the State."

"Enough, enough, monseigneur!" cried Colombe. "You have given me my father's liberty—his life—that is all I require. I want words to thank you for the boon. You have raised me from the depths of misery to perfect happiness."

"Not to keep you in suspense, you shall be the bearer of the order for your father's liberation," said the Regent, smiling. "Here it is," he added, signing a warrant, and delivering it to her.

With looks expressive of heartfelt gratitude, she knelt down and kissed the hand graciously extended towards her by the prince.

"I will not detain you longer, mademoiselle," said the Regent. "You are at liberty to retire."

"Have I your highness's permission to attend my sister on this errand of mercy?" asked Raoul.

"Oh no! no!" exclaimed Colombe, shuddering. "It is he who——" And she stopped.

"I understand what you would say," observed the Regent. "I have not yet done with you, sir," he added to Raoul. Then, turning to Evelyn, he said, "As you have so warmly interested yourself in Laborde's behalf, M. Harcourt, it is but proper you should be present at his liberation. Go with her."

Evelyn bowed profoundly. As Law was conducting Colombe to the door, the Regent whispered to the Abbé Dubois, who had taken no part in the proceedings, though he had watched them curiously, "Harkee, Dubois, I must see that girl again. She is uncommonly pretty."

"Your highness shall be obeyed," replied the complaisant abbé.

As Law returned, Raoul made a step towards the Regent, but the latter motioned him back.

"In what have I offended you, monseigneur?" asked Raoul.

"Do not presume to question me, sir," rejoined the Regent, haughtily. "Henceforward you are forbidden to enter my presence."

"At least, your highness will not refuse to mention the fault I have committed?" pleaded Raoul. "In the opinion of M. de Noailles, and the Commissioners of the Chamber of Justice, I have done a highly meritorious act."

"The knave is troublesome," said the Regent, turning to D'Argenson. "Deal with him."

"I have already felt it my duty to advise your highness," said the lieutenant of police, "that the person before us, Raoul Laborde, is a suspected sharper, and a

constant frequenter of tripots. I have very disadvantageous reports of him from my agents."

"But, my good M. d'Argenson, charges like these might be made with equal propriety against all the distinguished persons most in favour with his highness," murmured Raoul. "I have done nothing worse than Messieurs De Broglie, Nocé, or the rest of the Roués."

"Bid him hold his peace, and begone!" cried the Regent, impatiently.

"A moment, monseigneur. I have not quite done with him," said D'Argenson. "Were not this model of effrontery, who ventures to compare his conduct with that of the high and honourable persons who enjoy your highness's favour, under your protection, I should arrest him for certain knavish practices, which, if proved, would entitle him to take his father's place at the galleys."

Seeing that things were going decidedly against him, Raoul thought it best to assume a different manner, and throw himself upon the Regent's compassion.

"In consideration of your former favour, I implore your highness not to suffer me to be thus severely dealt with," he cried.

"He deserves no pity," observed the Regent to D'Argenson. "Yet do not be too hard upon him. Exile from Paris may be sufficient punishment."

"As your highness pleases," replied the lieutenant of police. "You hear, Raoul Laborde," he added, in an authoritative tone, to the individual addressed. "You will leave this city within twenty-four hours. If found within its walls after that time, you will be instantly arrested and clapped in prison."

"I obey," replied Raoul, with a sigh. "What I chiefly regret in quitting Paris is, that I can no longer participate in your highness's charming suppers, but I shall ever remember them with delight."

And with a profound reverence he withdrew.

"The rascal has wit," remarked the Regent to the lieutenant of police.

"He has not a particle of good in his composition, and will come to an ill end," remarked D'Argenson.

"I hope not, or he will blame me," remarked the Regent, laughing.

"Very likely, monseigneur," replied D'Argenson, with a grim smile. "I presume your highness has done with me."

And with a glance at Law, that bespoke an understanding between them, he bowed and retired.

VI.

HOW THE DUC DE NOAILLES CONSENTED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BANK.

"SEND for the Duc de Noailles. I desire to speak with him," said the Regent to Dubois. And as the order was communicated to an usher, his highness turned to Law, and observed with a laugh, "That was a skilful stratagem, M. Law. Knowing my weakness, you have taken advantage of it. Had you not brought in that charming girl, with her bewitching black eyes, to back your suit, I should have remained firm. But there was no resisting her beauty and tears."

"By whatever sentiments you have been moved, monseigneur, you have done well," replied Law.

"The Duc de Noailles will not think so," said the Regent.

"Here he comes," observed Dubois, as De Noailles was ushered into the cabinet. "Now is the moment to strike the blow."

"Your highness has been pleased to pardon a person sentenced to the galleys by the Chamber of Justice?" said Noailles, after making a reverence to the Regent. "Was it wise to do so?"

"Wise or not, I have done it," replied the Regent. "And I shall be obliged to pardon a great many more. I am beset with complaints and petitions against the sever-

measures you have adopted, and which, I fear, are bringing the government into discredit."

"There can be no doubt of it," said Dubois; "and unless a stop is put to these proceedings, a revolution may ensue. The Duc de Noailles cannot deny that his personal safety has been more than once jeopardised."

"I have no apprehension," replied the duke, haughtily; "and the measures I have commenced must be continued, or the nation must be declared bankrupt."

"Not so, M. le Duc," remarked Law. "My system has yet to be tried. I have so modified my plan, that I think it will meet your approval. At all events, it will in no way interfere with the prosecution of your measures, if you are determined to carry them on, while it will certainly tend to relieve the general distress." Then, turning to the Regent, he added, "I am prepared, if I receive your sanction, monseigneur, to organise a general Bank, with a capital of six millions, distributed in twelve hundred shares of five thousand livres, payable in four instalments, one-fourth in specie, and three-fourths in billets d'état. The object of my scheme is twofold. First, the creation of a bank of discount, which, from the low rate of interest it will require, shall effectually check usury; secondly, the formation of a company of commerce. As the establishment will be a private project, it will assist the treasury without in any way compromising it."

"You will recognise the force of that argument, duke?" said the Regent to Noailles.

"I do not see why your highness should take so much interest in this Bank," said the Duc de Noailles. "I cannot believe it will realise the Sieur Law's expectations; but as it is to be a private speculation, and the government will not be compromised by it, I am willing to assent to the scheme."

"You give your consent with the best grace imaginable, duke," said the Regent, laughing; "and I, as well as the Sieur Law, am infinitely beholden to you. An edict shall be issued authorising the immediate establishment of the Bank."

"You have gained the first step," whispered Dubois to Law. "All the rest will follow."

"I half regret the withdrawal of my opposition," muttered Noailles. "But it is too late to retract."

"Arrangements shall be made for opening the Bank on the publication of the edict," said Law. "I propose to establish the offices at the Hôtel de Mesmes, in the Rue Sainte Avoine, which I have already secured for the purpose, and which will afford ample space for the extensive operations I contemplate."

"I have never visited the Hôtel de Mesmes, though it was once the residence of the renowned Constable, Anne de Montmorency, and the occasional abode of Henri II.," observed the Regent. "You shall show it me, M. Law, and I can then judge of its fitness for the purpose to which you design to apply it."

"Your highness does me infinite honour," replied Law, bowing. "Unquestionably, the hotel is a more commodious structure than either the Bank of England or the Bank of Amsterdam."

"And you propose to rival those national establishments, eh, M. Law?" asked Noailles, derisively.

"Why not, M. le Duc?" rejoined Law. "I see no reason why France should be behind any other country in Europe, but I perceive many why she ought to be in advance of all."

"You must subscribe to that sentiment, duke," said the Regent, laughing.

"Most assuredly, monseigneur," replied Noailles. "I merely meant to observe, in reference to the Hôtel de Mesmes, that it appears somewhat too large for a private Bank."

"That must depend upon the requirements of the Bank itself," rejoined the Regent. "It is to be hoped that M. Law may not find it large enough. At any rate, I will inspect the house and judge of its capability. I will go this very day, after the council. No time must be lost in carrying the project into effect. To you, duke, I confide the task of laying it before the council of finances. Recommended by you, it is certain of adoption. Let-

ters patent, authorising the plan, can then be registered by the parliament, after which M. Law will be able to commence operations."

Seeing it was in vain to struggle further, Noailles made a merit of necessity, and promised implicit obedience to his highness's behests.

"Your Bank is now virtually established," observed Dubois in a low voice to Law.

Not many days after the assent of the Duc de Noailles had been obtained, Mr. Law's long-delayed scheme was carried into effect.

It being understood that the project was agreeable to the Regent, and that extraordinary favour would be shown to the Company, all the shares were immediately taken, Law himself having placed the whole of his funds in the Bank.

Authorised by letters patent of the second of May, 1716, the establishment was opened at the Hôtel de Mesmes, in the Rue Saint Avoine, under the designation of the GENERAL BANK OF LAW AND COMPANY.

VII.

HOW THE BANK PROSPERED.

At first the scheme was treated with derision and contempt by the Duc de Noailles and the financiers who acted with him. They ridiculed the notion of founding credit, restoring trade, and paying off the national debt, with six millions—one-fourth of which only was specie, while the other three-quarters consisted of depreciated paper, which could only be realised at a loss of seventy or eighty per cent. The idea was preposterous, and must be scouted by all sensible people.

In spite, however, of these evil prognostications, Mr. Law's Bank prospered exceedingly. The extreme regularity of its conduct, the promptitude and punctuality of its payments, and above all, the important guarantee afforded that all notes should be paid in coin of the weight and standard of the day on which the notes were issued, speedily ensured its success.

By the Regent's direction orders were given to all revenue-offices throughout the kingdom to receive the notes of the General Bank in payment of taxes, and such were the facilities offered in pecuniary transactions by these notes, that ere long they began to be preferred to specie, and passed current for one per cent. more than gold. All distrust in the Bank had by this time vanished, and given way to blind confidence. The notes became so much in demand, that a small premium was exacted on their delivery.

Moreover, Law's own anticipations of the beneficial effects which his plan would produce, were abundantly verified in the rapid and decided improvement that took place in every branch of trade and industry. Confidence was re-established. Foreigners began to interest themselves in the Bank, and the balance of exchange with London and Amsterdam rose to four and five per cent.

in favour of Paris, the rise being sustained by Law's skilful operations. Merchants recommenced their speculations; manufactures, long suspended, were resumed; expenditure returned to its former course; and usury was effectually stopped, because a higher rate of interest than that paid by the Bank could no longer be obtained. Everything wore a bright and promising aspect, and the acme of success was reached, when, at a general meeting of the proprietors of the Bank, a dividend of fifteen per cent. per annum was declared.

This was indeed a proud day for Law. Assembled in a large hall of the ancient Hôtel de Mesmes were the whole of the proprietors of the Bank, including some of the highest and most important personages of the day. The Regent himself was present, and was seated on a raised chair at the upper end of a long table. On his right was Law, who demonstrated very clearly and satisfactorily the prosperous condition of the Bank, dwelling on the advantages it had procured to commerce, and dilating on its brilliant prospects. His address was listened to with marked attention by the Regent, and on its conclusion, while the hall was resounding with applause, the prince observed to him, "I am determined to return to our original idea. This must be a Royal Bank, and you must be Director-General."

This being precisely what Law desired, he replied that he should be ready, whenever called upon, to carry out his highness's wishes.

VIII.

THE BAL DE L'OPÉRA.

PRIOR to the Regency no balls had been given at the Opera, which then formed part of the Palais Royal, but the happy idea having occurred to the Chevalier de Bouillon to board over the pit of the theatre and raise it to a level with the stage, so as to afford a large area for dancing, the idea was acted upon, much to the Regent's satisfaction, and Opera balls became thenceforward the rage.

But it will be scarcely credited that these balls, attended by the highest nobility and other members of a most refined and luxurious court, and by lovely women arrayed in the most exquisite toilettes, were only lighted by common candles! Yet so it was. Imagine how much the dresses must have lost in splendour, how greatly the charms of the wearers must have suffered from such miserable illumination!

Having attended one of these balls, which in all other respects was perfect, Law instantly perceived the defect, and resolved upon a remedy, but he kept his plan to himself until the opportunity arrived for its execution. This occurred when, the success of the Bank being decided, he gave a grand ball at the Opera to the Regent and the whole of the court circle.

Aware that great preparations had been made for the entertainment, the courtly company anticipated a surprise, but they were quite dazzled on entering the grand salle de danse, and could not help contrasting its brilliant appearance with its previous gloomy look. Hundreds of wax tapers in crystal chandeliers replaced the dim-burning candles, producing a magical effect, and brilliantly illuminated the whole theatre, which was so abundantly festooned with roses and other flowers that it resembled a vast floral temple. The exterior of the boxes had been

superbly decorated with crimson silk, and the stage represented a charming scene, designed for the occasion by Watteau. Groups of graceful young shepherds and enchanting shepherdesses, arrayed in vestments of azure silk, bedecked with ribands, and provided with silver crooks, might be seen reclining on mossy banks beneath the trees, the swains making love to the nymphs, who did not look either coy or cruel. After a while, village musicians entered on the scene, and, roused by the enlivening strains, the amorous couples rose to their feet and executed a lively pastoral dance.

Such was the ravishing spectacle that greeted the Regent as he entered, and after gazing round for a few minutes, he turned to express his surprise and admiration of it to its originator.

"I have long thought you an enchanter, M. Law, but I am now sure of it," he said. "This is a fairy land. My own balls are thrown completely into the shade. But do not stay with me. Go and receive the compliments of all your fair guests for the introduction of those wax-lights which let their charms be fully seen."

Chief among the princes and nobles who honoured Mr. Law with their company on this occasion, was the Duc de Bourbon—ordinarily styled M. le Duc—a descendant of the Grand Condé, chief of the Council of Regency, and, next to the Duc d'Orléans himself, the most important person in the kingdom. With the Duc de Bourbon was the beautiful Marquise de Prie, a clever and intriguing woman, who held him in her chains. Possessing great discernment, Madame de Prie early appreciated Law's remarkable financial talents, and directed the duke's attention to him. Next to M. le Duc was the Prince de Conti, with whom came the Maréchal d'Estrées and the Prince de Leon. Then came five other dukes, namely, Saint-Simon, Guiche, Chaulnes, D'Antin, and La Force. All the Regent's favourites were likewise present, and a very brilliant display they made.

But we willingly turn from them to the Regent's eldest daughter, the superb Duchesse de Berri, then in the very

pride of youth and beauty. Though this princess's countenance was somewhat too strongly characterised by voluptuousness, the expression accorded with her full and magnificent person. Wherever she moved, she drew all eyes upon her, as well by her noble figure as by her majestic deportment. Her diamonds were superb, and she wore the splendid earrings which had belonged to Anne of Austria. The Duchesse de Berri was accompanied by the Chevalier de Riom, to whom she was privately married, and who certainly could not have been recommended to her notice by his good looks, since he is described by Saint-Simon as "un gros garçon, court, joufflée, pâle, qui avec force bourgeons ne ressemblait pas mal à un abcès." De Riom had something of Petruchio in his character. Acting upon the advice of his uncle, the Duc de Lauzun, who said to him, "Les filles de France veulent être menées le bâton haut," he succeeded in humbling his imperious spouse.

In the train of the proud Duchesse de Berri were her sisters, Mademoiselles de Chartres and De Valois. By some persons the first-named of these princesses was accounted the loveliest of the Regent's daughters, though she had not the superb air of her elder sister. Her features, however, were enchanting, and she had a delicate complexion, fine eyes, a slight but graceful figure, a charming mouth, and teeth like pearls. Moreover, she was an accomplished vocalist, and, though singularly soft and feminine in appearance and manner, had some masculine tastes. She rode well, fenced skilfully, and was a perfect shot with carbine and pistol.

Mademoiselle de Valois was not a model of beauty, like her sisters, her nose being too large, and a projecting tooth interfering with the form of her mouth. But she was well proportioned, had dove-like eyes, blue tresses like threads of gold, and the ravishingly white skin generally found to accompany locks of that hue. In attendance upon this princess was the handsome and dissolute Duc de Richelieu, so celebrated for his successes, and who at that time was greatly smitten by her attractions.

As it is impossible to describe all the beautiful women who attended Mr. Law's ball, or even to enumerate them, we shall content ourselves with particularising those who, from one cause or another, attracted marked attention. Passing by, then, the young Princesse de Conti, the Princesse de Rohan, Mademoiselle de Charolois, the Duchesse de la Tremouille, the Duchesse de la Ferté, the Marquise de Noye, Mesdames de Polignac, De Jonsac, De Gesvres, De Nesle, D'Albret, De Bouzoules, De Gacé, De la Vrillière, De Duras, and a host of others, we will come to a lovely creature who at that time was the Regent's principal favourite, the Comtesse de Parabère.

A lovely brunette, small but exquisitely proportioned, dark as a gipsy, with large, lustrous black eyes, jetty brows, and pearly teeth, Madame de Parabère had many engaging qualities, which specially attracted her royal admirer. Sprightly in manner, fond of repartee, abounding in lively sallies, she enjoyed his petit soupers, and doted upon champagne. The Regent used to call her his "little black crow."

Another charming person, who likewise held the Regent in thrall, was Madame d'Averne, and her charms served as a foil to those of her dark little rival. Madame d'Averne had blonde tresses, languishing blue eyes, an exquisitely fair skin, and a waist that could be spanned by a garter. Her physiognomy was charming, and few could resist her captivating smiles, or the soft witchery of her glances.

A third enchanting favourite was Madame de Sabran, whose features were more regularly beautiful, more classical in form, than either of those we have just endeavoured to depict. Her expression was somewhat serious, proud, and cold, and few, except those in the secret, would have suspected that the seeming prude was in reality a woman of exceedingly ardent temperament. The Duc d'Orléans having made the discovery, thought that this affected prudery lent piquancy to his liaison with her.

To the above list several others might be appended—Mademoiselles de Beurnonville and D'Estrées, for instance—but the specimens we have given may possibly suffice.

Our next sketch, if only for the sake of variety, shall not be that of a young beauty, but of an exceedingly plain elderly woman. In compliment to Mr. Law, who stood very high in her favour, the Regent's mother, the Princess Palatine, paid him the distinction—and from *her* it was a great distinction—of being present at his ball. She was about sixty-four at this period, and was short, fat, and abominably ugly. In addition to her ugliness, Madame, as she was styled, had a very sharp tongue, and spared nobody. It may give an idea of her character to mention, that when her son announced his intention of marrying Mademoiselle de Blois, she treated him to a sound box on the ear. Madame detested her daughter-in-law, who stood greatly in awe of her. She also disliked her granddaughters, especially the Duchesse de Berri, who repaid her dislike with interest, and many were the quarrels between them. But the grand object of Madame's aversion was the Abbé Dubois, and she made frequent but unavailing attempts to detach her son from him.

Among the foreign ambassadors who were present, we may select Lord Stair, and of him our notice must be necessarily brief. This nobleman, who had previously served with distinction under William III. and the Duke of Marlborough, was a tall, handsome man, in the prime of life, being then about two-and-forty, polished in manner, a wonderful linguist, quick at surprising the secrets of others, yet never betraying his own either by word or look. The Earl of Stair gave admirable dinners, and encouraged his guests to drink freely, but never lost his self-command. Louis XIV., who had heard him extolled as a model of politeness, was resolved to put his good breeding to the proof, and desired him to step first into the royal carriage. Lord Stair obeyed without hesitation, whereupon the old monarch observed that he had not been misinformed, but that his lordship was the best-bred man he had met with. With the English ambassador came Evelyn Harcourt; but his lordship, after a few minutes, good naturedly dispensed with his secretary's attendance.

IX.

THE DUCHESSE DE BERRI.

NOT sorry to be liberated, Evelyn moved about, well-nigh bewildered by the beauty of the scene. The perfumed atmosphere, the sweet strains, the lights, the flowers, the ravishing loveliness and exquisite toilettes of the dancers, all combined to captivate his imagination, and produced an effect such as he had never before experienced. While feasting his eyes with the spectacle, and discovering each moment some fresh object of attraction, he approached a group of lovely women and splendidly-attired gallants, of which the superb Duchesse de Berri constituted the centre. Struck by her resplendent charms, he could not withdraw his eyes, and the ardour of his gaze attracting her attention, she noticed him in her turn, and thinking him singularly handsome, inquired who he was from the Chevalier de Riom.

De Riom was either unable or unwilling to gratify her curiosity; but Law, who was standing near, chancing to hear the inquiry, informed her that the young gentleman in question was attached to the English embassy, and was named Evelyn Harcourt.

"With your permission I will present him to your highness," said Law.

The duchess graciously assented, and Evelyn was accordingly introduced. It soon became evident, from the smiles she bestowed upon him, that it rested only with himself to improve the position he had obtained.

This little incident did not pass unnoticed by the Comtesse de Parabère, who was standing with the Regent at a little distance, and now drew his attention to what was going on.

"The duchess appears to have attached a new slave to her chariot," she remarked, "and it must be owned that her captive is very handsome. Who is he?"

The Regent could not inform her. Almost purblind, he did not recognise Evelyn, and went nearer to ascertain who he could be.

On approaching the young Englishman he recollected his features, and addressed him very affably. This condescension on his highness's part drew general attention towards the object of it, and it immediately began to be whispered about that a new favourite had appeared, who stood equally well with the Regent and the Duchesse de Berri.

The rumour appeared to receive confirmation when the beautiful duchess suddenly begged the Regent to call for a minuet, and offered her hand to Harcourt.

With a breast swelling with pride and exaltation, for which, under the circumstances, he may be pardoned, Evelyn went through the graceful dance with the princess; and, being an admirable performer, acquitted him so well that he rose materially in his lovely partner's opinion.

All the aspirants to the duchess's favour, who would have given their best blood for a smile, became envious of him—all the more susceptible among the fair sex regarded him with admiration.

While the minuet was going on, the Abbé Dubois approached the Regent, and said to him, in a low voice:

"Your highness will recollect Colombe Laborde, the girl who solicited her father's pardon from you, and obtained it. You told me you desired to see her again. She is here."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Regent, delighted. "I have often thought of her, and have longed to behold her again. Bring her to my box. I will go there at once, and shall await her coming with impatience."

Dubois withdrew, and the prince proceeded to his box, which was fitted up with mirrors, sofas, fauteuils, and lustres like a salon in the palace, and screened from public gaze by curtains of crimson damask. The panels were ornamented with charming paintings by Lancret and Boucher, and a more exquisite little room cannot be conceived.

Here, however, we will leave him, and return to the salle de danse.

By this time the minuet was over, and the beautiful duchess, who complained a little of fatigue, had been led to a seat, but she did not dismiss her partner, and they were engaged in discourse, which had almost taken a tender turn, when she observed a sudden change in Evelyn's expressive countenance, and quickly discovered that it was caused by a very beautiful young creature, who was passing at the moment with the Abbé Dubois.

Long before this Colombe had seen Evelyn, though her presence at the ball had been unnoticed by him. With a pang which she could not repress, though she would have died rather than own it, she watched him during the dance, and perceived how completely he was fascinated by the charms of the duchess.

She was still under the influence of these painful emotions when the Abbé Dubois came up, and told her the Regent desired to see her. The summons could not be disobeyed, so she went with him, but her annoyance was increased when he led her past Harcourt and the duchess. She studiously averted her gaze from them, but her heightened colour showed how much she was affected, and when Evelyn caught sight of her, he could almost tell what was passing in her breast.

This it was that had caused the sudden change in Evelyn's manner which had attracted the attention of the princess.

"Who is she?" she said, quickly. "You know her."

Evelyn, who had no motive for concealment, briefly explained all he knew relative to Colombe's history. The duchess seemed interested in the relation. When he had done, she said,

"Where can she be going with the Abbé Dubois?"

"They are gone to the Regent's box," observed Madame de Mouchy, one of her dames d'honneur, who overheard the inquiry.

Evelyn noticed the singular smile which accompanied this observation, and a thrill passed through his frame.

"We will follow them," said the duchess, rising.

And signing to Harcourt and Madame de Mouchy to attend her, she proceeded towards the Regent's box.

Meanwhile, Colombe and Dubois had already arrived there. On being ushered into the little salon, Colombe was startled by finding the Regent alone, but the ease and affability of his manner restored her, and she took the seat which he offered her. Dubois remained for a few minutes, chatting in a lively manner, and helped to set her at her ease. He then made an excuse for retiring, and was bowing to the Regent, when Colombe got up and begged permission to withdraw.

"No, no—I don't want you—stay where you are!" cried Dubois, sharply.

"I cannot possibly part with you so soon," said the Regent, taking her hand, and detaining her.

"I entreat your highness to let me go," cried Colombe, alarmed by the impassioned manner he had begun to assume.

Finding, however, that the Regent was deaf to her entreaties, she turned to Dubois, and said,

"I came hither under your conduct, M. l'Abbé, and I desire you to take me to the Marquise Prie, who brought me to the ball."

Dubois replied by a mocking laugh, and was again preparing to depart, when the door opened, and the Duchesse de Berri entered, followed by Evelyn and Madame de Mouchy.

On seeing the duchess, Colombe disengaged herself from the Regent, and flew to her for protection.

"What means this intrusion, madame?" cried the Duc d'Orléans, angrily. "My orders to Picard were that no one was to be admitted."

"Picard is not to blame. I would come in," replied the Duchesse de Berri. "And I am very glad I did so," she added, glancing at Colombe.

End of the Second Book.

BOOK III.—M. LABORDE.

I.

LITTLE CATHERINE LAW.

On M. Laborde's liberation from the Conciergerie, after he had received a pardon from the Regent, the unfortunate gentleman and his daughter were brought to the Hôtel Law in the Place Vendôme, where apartments were assigned them, and everything done for their comfort.

Colombe's singular sweetness of disposition and engaging manners soon gained her the regard of Lady Catherine Law, and with her ladyship's daughter she became an especial favourite. Little Catherine Law, indeed, quite regarded her as a sister.

After remaining with his protector until fully restored to health, Laborde, whose property had been confiscated by the Chamber of Justice, was appointed by Law, who had a very high opinion of his abilities, to an important position in the Bank. He then removed to a house in the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, but his daughter did not go with him, for little Catherine would not hear of her friend's departure. However, though Colombe did not reside with her father, they were but little separated, for she saw him every day.

Nothing, indeed, could be more agreeable than Colombe's position. Treated by Mr. Law and Lady Catherine in every respect like one of their own family, she appeared at all their entertainments, and accompanied them to the numerous fêtes and balls to which they were invited. Wherever she went, her remarkable beauty excited admiration, and many were the aspirants to her favour, but none of them succeeded in producing any impression upon her, and for the very sufficient reason, that her heart had been given to Evelyn Harcourt. She

and Evelyn often met, for the young secretary of legation was ever a welcome guest at Mr. Law's house. Little Catherine was generally present at their interviews, and with a girl's quickness soon detected their secret; and sometimes, when alone with Colombe, took a malicious pleasure in teazing her about the young Englishman.

"Don't you think him very handsome, Colombe?" she said, one day, after Evelyn's departure.

"Whom do you mean?" rejoined the other, trying to look unconscious.

"Why, Evelyn, to be sure," replied Catherine.

"I have not thought about his good looks," said Colombe; "but I know he is very amiable and very kind—and, I may add, very agreeable."

"Oh, I'm quite sure you find him agreeable, or you wouldn't talk to him so much," cried little Catherine. "Now, to me, he appears rather dull and stupid. He never says anything that I consider amusing."

"Evelyn dull and stupid!" exclaimed Colombe; "why, he is the very contrary! How can you make such an assertion, when you were laughing all the time he was here?"

"I wanted to see whether you would defend him," rejoined Catherine. "Why, how you do blush, Colombe!"

"You make me blush by talking such nonsense," said the other. "But here is Télémaque, which your papa gave you yesterday. Read a chapter to me."

"You desire to change the subject," she replied, taking up the book. "But before I begin, let me ask you a question, Colombe. Would you," she continued, very deliberately—"would you, I say, like to live in London?"

"Live in London!" exclaimed Colombe, again colouring. "I can't tell. It is a very fine city, I believe. But I never thought of living there."

"Haven't you?" cried Catherine, laughing. "Then it's time you did. Evelyn Harcourt lives in London."

"A truce to this nonsense," said Colombe. "Let me hear what good advice Mentor gave Télémaque."

Upon this, little Catherine opened the book, and with

a demure countenance pretended to read as follows: "'My son,' said Mentor, 'when you design to take a wife, seek her not in Ithaca, but in Thrace—that is to say, not in London, but in Paris. Place yourself under my guidance, and I will conduct you to the dwelling—papa's hôtel in the Place Vendôme, no doubt—where resides a nymph, who, of all her sex, is best calculated to make you happy.' I think some one else, besides the discreet son of Ulysses, would do well to follow Mentor's advice. Eh, Colombe?" she added, archly.

"Shut up the book directly, if you please, mademoiselle," said Colombe, with a stately look.

From the foregoing it will be inferred that little Catherine had a tolerably clear perception as to how matters stood between Evelyn and Colombe.

All went on swimmingly between the young pair until the Opera ball, at which Colombe was a witness of the fascination exercised over her lover by the resistless Duchesse de Berri. How it chanced that Colombe was brought to this ball by the Marquise de Prie we must now explain. The marchioness was a great gambler in the funds, and being in the habit of consulting Law about her speculations, often called at his house in the Place Vendôme. On one of these occasions she saw Colombe, and being much taken by her beauty, insisted upon carrying her off for a short visit to the palace of the Duc de Bourbon, at Chantilly. Had it been possible, Colombe would have declined the invitation, but seeing that Lady Catherine wished her to go, she assented. During her stay at Chantilly the ball occurred, and she was brought to it by Madame de Prie, and unluckily became a witness of Evelyn's subjugation by the Duchesse de Berri. With what followed the reader is acquainted. We may add, that after the opportune entrance of the Duchesse de Berri into the Regent's box, the terrified girl was taken back by Evelyn to Madame de Prie. Both were too much embarrassed at the time for any explanation to be possible between them, and indeed nothing but the peculiar circumstances in which

she was placed would have induced Colombe to accept Evelyn's arm. As they were moving on through the brilliant crowd he attempted to say a few words in exculpation of his conduct, but receiving no reply, he became silent in his turn, and when they reached Madame de Prie he was dismissed with a formal curtsey by Colombe.

Colombe did not return to Chantilly after the ball, but pleading sudden indisposition, was left in the Place Vendôme. Next day she was really ill, her feelings having sustained a shock from which she did not immediately recover. But she kept her grief to herself.

Struck by her change of manner towards Evelyn, and unable to account for it, little Catherine did not fail to ask the cause, but received no satisfactory solution.

"You used to like Evelyn once, Colombe," remarked the little girl. "What has he done to offend you? Poor fellow! he seems very much hurt. I'm quite sorry for him. Forgive him, and make it up."

"I'm not offended with M. Harcourt, Kate, and have nothing to forgive."

"Don't tell stories, Colombe. If you weren't displeased with him, you wouldn't call him *Monsieur* Harcourt. You never did so till lately. Why have you become so formal all at once? Come now, tell me what it's all about. Can't I set it right?"

"Well, perhaps I'm not altogether pleased with him. But I have no right to complain of anything he has done."

"That's as much as owning yourself in the wrong, Colombe. May I tell Evelyn what you say?"

"On no account," cried Colombe, decidedly.

Little Catherine made several other attempts to bring about a reconciliation between them, but all were equally unsuccessful. Perhaps Colombe might have been moved by her lover's apparent contrition, if her feelings of jealousy had not been again roused. A grand entertainment was given at the Luxembourg by the Duchesse de Berri, at which Lady Catherine and Mr. Law were present, and

on the morning after the fête little Catherine rushed into her friend's room in a state of great excitement to tell her that Evelyn had been at the Luxembourg.

"That doesn't surprise me," said Colombe, coldly. "I felt sure he would be there."

"Ah! but it will surprise you to hear what an effect he produced. Madame la Duchesse de Berri danced with him twice. If you had been there, you might have seen them."

"I'm glad I didn't go," muttered Colombe, turning very pale.

"I have something more to tell you about him and the duchess, which will greatly amuse you," said Catherine. "Mamma told me——"

"Pray spare me any further details," cried Colombe, checking her. "I have already explained to you that I no longer take any interest in M. Harcourt, and would rather not hear about him. If he is so much admired by great ladies, and such a favourite as you represent with the Duchesse de Berri, I hope he will confine his attentions to them, so that we may see less of him in future."

"I never heard you make such an ill-natured remark before, Colombe. I do believe you are jealous."

"I jealous!" exclaimed the other, colouring. "Have I not just told you I am perfectly indifferent to M. Harcourt? It matters nothing to me how much he is admired, or by whom."

"I suspect it matters a great deal more than you are willing to confess," rejoined Catherine. "But I won't teaze you any more," she added, seeing the tears spring to Colombe's eyes. "I think you are quite right not to care for Evelyn, and if I were in your place, I would do just the same. I won't take his part any more. You shall see how I will treat him when he next appears. I'll tell him we don't desire his company, and that he had better go to the great ladies and the duchess."

"You mustn't do anything of the kind, you silly child," cried Colombe, smiling through her tears.

But I will," said Catherine.

On that very day Evelyn presented himself, and was received with her customary kindness by Lady Catherine Law, who, unconscious of the mischief she was doing, immediately launched out into praises of the Duchesse de Berri, and was dilating upon the splendour of her attire, when Colombe arose, and quitted the room. Scarcely was she gone, and the duchess once more brought on the tapis, than little Catherine likewise got up, and, imitating Colombe's manner as closely as she could, moved towards the door, and would have gone out if her mamma had not called her back. Compelled to remain, she took up Télémaque, feigning to be profoundly interested in its perusal, and when Evelyn concluded his visit, would not even raise her eyes to bid him adieu; for which piece of misconduct she was very properly reproved by Lady Catherine.

Next day, Evelyn called again, and finding little Catherine by herself, he produced a note, and begged her to convey it without delay to Colombe, and, if possible, bring him an answer. Enchanted to be thus employed, little Catherine flew off instantly, but returned with a very different expression of countenance.

"Well, what answer do you bring me?" he cried.

"This," she replied, giving him back the billet he had confided to her.

"My own note unopened!" he exclaimed. "Did she refuse to read it?"

"Yes," returned Catherine; "and she begs you won't trouble yourself to write again, as all your letters will be returned in the same way."

"But do go back to her, dear Kate, and implore her to grant me a word—only one word," he cried.

"It's of no use, I tell you, sir," replied the little girl. "She won't come."

"Will you engage to deliver a message to her, Kate?"

"I can't promise. What is it?"

"Tell her she is entirely mistaken if she supposes I have been inconstant; and though appearances are against me, I swear——"

"Well, what do you swear?"

"That I have never for a single moment swerved from my allegiance to her."

"I suppose you said all that in your note?"

"All that, and a great deal more."

"So Colombe thought, and therefore refused to read it. I'm sorry I can't deliver your message."

After this signal failure, Evelyn did not make another attempt. He began to discontinue his visits, and instead of appearing daily, as he used to do, seldom called more than once a week. This state of things endured for some time, and there appeared little prospect of accommodating matters. So far from being closed, the breach was widened. Colombe was informed that Evelyn had become quite the rage at the Regent's court, that he mingled in all its gaieties, and participated in its dissipations. This statement, the correctness of which she did not in the least doubt, confirmed her in the determination of banishing him from her affections.

But she did not find the task easy of accomplishment. Evelyn's hold upon her heart was too firm to be dislodged.

II.

MONSIEUR NICOMÈDE COSSARD.

WHILE all this was going on, M. Laborde seemed in a fair way of retrieving his fortunes. Owing to the opportunities afforded by his position in the Bank, and the confidence placed in him by his patron, he managed to make several lucky hits, and was growing rich rapidly. He had now but one thought, that of becoming wealthy. The greed of gain took entire possession of his breast. Next to acquiring money himself, his grand desire was to marry his daughter to a man of large capital. And he was lucky enough to find the very person he sought.

One of the principal shareholders in the Bank, and a director into the bargain, was M. Nicomède Cossard. He had been an army-victualler in the previous reign, and had amassed a large sum of money, the greater part of which, by means of a heavy bribe to Madame de Parabère, he had contrived to save from the clutches of the Chamber of Justice. M. Nicomède Cossard was of course too important a person to be neglected by Law, and he had been invited on several occasions to the great banker's residence in the Place Vendôme, where he beheld Mademoiselle Laborde, and became captivated by her beauty. He caused himself to be presented to her, and was as much pleased by her manner as by her personal attractions. In a matter of so much moment as marriage, M. Cossard was in no hurry in coming to a decision—in fact, he had hitherto been rather averse to matrimony—but at last he made up his mind, and one day, while at the Bank, he went into Laborde's room and broached the subject to him. There was no necessity to explain his circumstances. With these M. Laborde was sufficiently acquainted. Would he give him his daughter? If so, he, Nicomède, would make a very large marriage-settlement upon her. Delighted with the proposal, Laborde did not take long to consider, but

declared the alliance would give him the greatest possible satisfaction, and, so far as they were concerned, the transaction was there and then concluded. Persuaded that the marriage-settlement he proposed to make upon her would influence Colombe as strongly as it evidently did her father, M. Cossard entertained no misgivings as to the issue of the negotiation. Neither did Laborde for a moment dream of opposition on Colombe's part to his will. It was therefore with full expectation of arranging the affair according to his wishes that he sought a private conversation with her next morning. His first object was to dispose of Evelyn, so he began by deploring the young man's strong tendency to gallantry, when Colombe checked him by saying:

"I must beg you not to speak of M. Harcourt, papa. I no longer take any interest in him."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," he replied, "for he was the only difficulty in the way of the proposition I am about to make to you. He is a very charming young man, M. Harcourt, and I shall ever feel indebted to him for the service he has rendered me, but I don't think he would suit you as a husband."

"If I ever thought of him in such a light, I have long since abandoned the idea," replied Colombe, turning pale. "And I am quite sure he has ceased to think of me."

"So it would appear—so it would appear," said Laborde, shaking his head. "If he did care for you, he couldn't make love to twenty other women, as I hear he does. Had he persevered in his suit, I should have considered it my duty, as a prudent father, to reject him. But to the point. I have an offer of marriage for you."

"An offer of marriage, papa!" exclaimed Colombe, starting.

"A highly advantageous offer," pursued her father; "and from a gentleman the very reverse of Evelyn, who would have been certain to neglect you, and render you miserable by his infidelities—a gentleman in all respects calculated to make you happy—not, perhaps, handsome, or even young, though far from old, but possessing what

is infinitely better than youth or good looks—immense wealth. A millionnaire, in fact. Disposed, moreover, to gratify all your wishes, however boundless they may be—to lodge you as sumptuously as Miladi Law herself is lodged—to provide you with a retinue of servants equal to miladi's—with carriages as grand as hers—with diamonds as splendid as those she wears—and, in a word, place you upon an equality with her."

"I have no such extravagant desires as these, papa," Colombe replied. "It would not gratify me to call a grand hotel like this my own. I do not want diamonds, rich dresses, carriages, and a host of lacqueys. Such things yield me no happiness. As at present circumstanced, I have far too many luxuries and enjoyments."

"I expected a very different answer from you," said her father, somewhat taken aback, "and must own I am disappointed by your want of spirit. I thought when you married you would like to live in splendid style—to emulate Miladi Law, and the wives of other great financiers. However, I dare say the husband I design for you will accommodate himself to your wishes, whatever they may be."

"And pray who is the husband you design for me, papa? You have not told me his name. Do I know him? have I seen him?"

"You have seen him often in this house, at which he is a frequent visitor, and are slightly acquainted with him. But it is quite possible he may not have produced such an impression on you as you have on him."

"Do tell me who it is, papa? I cannot possibly guess."

"It is the great army-victualler—the great capitalist, M. Nicomède Cossard," replied her father, giving all the importance he could to the announcement. To his surprise and mortification Colombe burst into a laugh.

"What! that short, stout, ugly old man?" she cried. "You can't possibly mean M. Cossard, whom little Catherine Law calls M. Nez-Camus, from his excessively flat nose. Why, he is nearly as old as you are, papa. Surely you can't wish me to marry *him?*"

"Pardon, mademoiselle," returned her father, frowning awfully, "I *do* wish to marry you to M. Nicomède Cossard, and in this case my will is law. I have promised you to him, and mean to keep my word. If M. Cossard is not very handsome, and not very young, and his nose is somewhat flatter than ordinary, he does not deserve ridicule. He has a thousand good qualities which ought to recommend him to you. I need not enumerate them, but will sum them up in a word by saying he is immensely wealthy."

"I don't doubt what you say, papa, about M. Cossard's excellent qualities, but I really cannot prevail upon myself to marry him."

"Take care, mademoiselle. I repeat, that I have given my word that the marriage shall take place. Permit me also to observe, that feeling certain I was making the best arrangement possible for you, I did not think it necessary to consult your inclinations."

"But, dear papa, you cannot desire to make me miserable?"

"Miserable! certainly not, my dear child. In providing you with an amiable, wealthy husband, anxious to gratify your inclinations, I can scarcely be charged with such a design. Hear me, Colombe. I have set my heart upon this marriage. It *must* take place."

"But, papa, I cannot give M. Cossard the affection he is entitled to. I can scarcely think of him without contempt. I should deceive him were I to marry him."

"Make yourself quite easy on that score, my dear child. M. Cossard is not too exacting. He only bargains for a young and lovely wife, and doesn't stipulate for affection."

"But I can't sell myself thus, papa—I won't!" she cried.

"Why this extraordinary vivacity, mademoiselle? Am I to understand you have some attachment of which I have been kept in ignorance?"

"You have been aware of the only attachment I ever had, papa," she replied. "And that"—and she hesitated —"is quite over."

"Such being the case—and I must reiterate my satisfaction that the silly affair is completely at an end—there can be nothing to prevent the proposed marriage with M. Cossard. Evelyn Harcourt, I may now say it, has behaved very badly to you, has slighted you for others, and you will take a very proper revenge upon him. He will then estimate aright the prize he has lost."

"In seeking such revenge, I should wound myself far more deeply than I should wound Evelyn," she rejoined, sorrowfully. "He never thought me a prize, or he would not have cast me away so quickly."

"He had no right to trifle with your affections," cried her father, sharply. "But let us say no more about him. I can quite understand your distaste to the proposed match. But believe me it will be for the best. Very few marry the object of their affections, and those who do generally repent the step. Take my word for it, the happiest couples are those who are richest. If they are not, it is their own fault, since they have every material of happiness. This material, in the greatest abundance, I have provided for you. You may begin with indifference for Nicomède—dislike, if you please—but before many months you will deem him a model of a husband, and be the envy of all your acquaintance."

"I shall never be able to endure him, papa. I cannot go to the altar with him."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed her father. "Such scruples are simply ridiculous. Leave all responsibility to me, who counsel and enjoin the step."

"I implore you not to insist upon my compliance, papa If you do, you will drive me to despair."

"Pooh! this is mere silly talk. I shall tell Nicomède you consent."

"Oh no, no, no! I beseech you not!"

"I will bring him to you at this hour to-morrow. If you value my regard, you will receive him properly."

"I will endeavour to obey you, papa, but——"

"Don't compel me to use stronger language, Colombe. I have your best interests in view. Be satisfied of that. Ere long you will thank me."

"I fear you yourself may regret this undue exertion of your authority, papa," she replied. "Give me a little time for consideration, and perhaps I may overcome my repugnance to M. Cossard. I will try to do so—indeed I will."

"Unluckily, it does not rest with me to grant your request. Nicomède requires an immediate decision, and were I to ask for time, would inevitably fly off, and the affair would come to an end."

"Then act as you please, papa," she said, in a tone of resignation. "I am prepared to obey."

"You are a dear, good, dutiful child," he cried, tenderly embracing her. "Perhaps, under some pretext, I may obtain a month's delay from Nicomède. At all events, I will try. But if I do this, you must promise me—solemnly promise—not to enter into any engagement, without my knowledge or consent, with Evelyn."

"Such a promise is wholly unnecessary, papa," she replied, "but I readily give it."

"To-morrow you will receive Nicomède in the character of a suitor?"

"That is more difficult to perform than the other. However, I consent."

"Enough!" cried Laborde. "I am perfectly content with you, my child. I fully appreciate the sacrifice you are willing to make for me. But you will have your reward. And now let us go to Lady Catherine's boudoir."

As they were quitting the room, little Catherine rushed in.

"Oh, Colombe," she cried, "Evelyn Harcourt has just been here, and wanted so much to see you. I told him you were engaged with your papa, but that didn't satisfy him. He begged and implored me to take a message to you, but I wouldn't comply."

"Is he gone?" exclaimed Colombe, scarcely able to conceal her agitation.

"Yes, he's gone," replied the little girl. "But he said he would call to-morrow morning, when he *must* see y' He bade me tell you so."

"I wish I had seen him!" cried Colombe, unable to maintain her firmness.

"Have I done wrong?—ought I to have come to you?" cried little Catherine. "I felt inclined to do so, he was so very urgent, but I fancied you might be vexed."

"Say no more—say no more, I beg of you," cried Colombe.

While little Catherine was gazing at her with a look of perplexity and distress, Laborde took leave of his daughter, saying, as he quitted the room,

"I don't forbid you to see Evelyn to-morrow, my child, but remember your promise to me."

"I shall not fail," rejoined Colombe.

"What promise have you given, Colombe?" inquired the little girl.

"Oh! nothing it concerns you to know," was the reply.

"You won't trust me, Colombe," cried Kate, reproachfully.

"I can't trust you, darling."

"You might," still more reproachfully.

"Well, then, I will; but not now."

"Why not now?"

"Don't ask. Be content. You will know all soon enough."

III.

HOW COLOMBE WAS INDUCED TO ACCEPT M. NICOMÈDE COSSARD.

Poor Colombe was cruelly disappointed. In spite of all he had said to little Catherine about his urgent desire for an interview, Evelyn did not appear next morning, nor was any message received from him, and Colombe was still in a state of extreme agitation and suspense, momentarily expecting his arrival, when the death-blow was given to her hopes by a note which she received from her father.

"I pity you sincerely, my poor child," wrote Laborde, "but you have been indulging a very foolish passion for a very unworthy person, as you cannot fail to acknowledge when I tell you I have just ascertained that Evelyn is gone to La Muette, in the Bois de Boulogne, to attend a hunting-party given by Madame la Duchesse de Berri. With such irresistible attraction before him, it is not surprising he should break his appointment with you. But I hope you will know how to resent such conduct, and replace a faithless lover by one prepared to prove his devotion to you. This note will serve as Nicomède's avant-courier."

"My father is right!" exclaimed Colombe, as she perused these lines. "Cost what it may, I must tear Evelyn's image from my breast. If he loved me—if he desired to see me—he would have disobeyed the summons of that royal syren. But he is false, and I should indeed be wanting in spirit if I did not resent his perfidy."

"What does your papa tell you in that letter, Colombe?" inquired little Catherine, who had watched her read it.

"He tells me Evelyn is gone to a hunting-party given by Madame la Duchesse de Berri, so of course I must not expect him. My mind is quite made up."

"To do what?"

"To obey papa—to marry M. Nicomède Cossard."

"I hope you won't be sorry for it. Evelyn, I am sure, would make a much nicer husband than old M. Nez-Camus."

"If you love me, Kate, don't allude to Evelyn again."

"Well, I'll try not—but I never felt so much inclined to take his part before. I wish you had seen him yesterday, Colombe."

"If I had, it would have made no difference."

"Yes it would—all might have been arranged."

"And to-day there would have been a fresh rupture. No, it is better as it is. An impassable barrier shall be placed between us."

At this moment, a lacquey in gorgeous livery entered to announce M. Laborde and M. Nicomède Cossard.

"Ah! I hope I shall be able to go through with it!" ejaculated Colombe, feeling her strength suddenly desert her.

"May I stop in the room with you?" entreated Catherine.

"Yes, do, by all means," replied Colombe.

At this moment the two gentlemen entered, and Laborde formally presented Nicomède to his daughter, who, scarcely able to control her agitation, curtseyed deeply in reply to the bow addressed to her by the army-victualler. M. Cossard's appearance was certainly not very prepossessing. In age he was about fifty, perhaps rather more. In stature short, with a goodly rotundity of paunch, stout legs, and little feet. A very flat nose, a long upper lip, and a very long and cunning chin, imparted a comical look to his fat, pasty face. However, he made the best of himself, being magnificently attired in sky-blue velvet. He also wore a vast well-powdered peruke, lace of the finest kind on his cravat and ruffles, diamonds on his knees, buckles, and sword-hilt, and caused his legs to look twice as large as they were in reality by casing them in cream-coloured silk hose. But, in spite of his rich attire, his personal appearance so ill accorded with the character he assumed, that little Catherine imme-

diately began to titter, and could scarcely refrain from laughing outright.

"Let us leave them together for a moment, my dear," said Laborde to the little girl.

"Yes, I'll come," she replied. "You mustn't marry that ridiculous old fright," she whispered to Colombe. And with this piece of counsel, she followed Laborde to the farther end of the room.

"You seem agitated, mademoiselle," observed Nicomède, who, notwithstanding his absurd appearance, was by no means a bad-hearted fellow. "Am I to understand that my suit is disagreeable to you? If so, I will at once retire."

Colombe felt half inclined to throw herself upon his compassion, but the presence of her father, who was closely watching her, restrained her.

Finding she made no reply, with an absurd air of gallantry, which again excited little Catherine's merriment, Nicomède took her cold, trembling hand, and pressed his great thick lips to it. Colombe shuddered at the contact.

"As yet we are almost strangers to each other, mademoiselle," said Nicomède, "but I flatter myself you will like me more as you know me better. It shall be the study of my life to please you, and I doubt not I shall succeed."

After indulging in a rhapsody about her beauty and his own devotion, he threw himself at Colombe's feet, almost convulsing little Catherine with laughter. In fact, his appearance was so ridiculous in this posture, that Colombe herself could not repress a smile. Feeling, however, the necessity of putting an end to the scene, she begged him to rise, and as he was unable to do so unassisted, helped him to his feet. Greatly embarrassed by the exhibition he made, and by little Catherine's laughter, Nicomède would have beaten a retreat, if he could have done so creditably. But this being impossible, he signed to Laborde, who instantly flew to his relief.

"I am afraid I am a very maladroit lover, mademoi-

selle," said Nicomède, "but your good nature will excuse me."

"My daughter will readily dispense with all the ceremonies usual on these occasions," interposed Laborde. "All that is necessary is, that you should come to a distinct understanding."

"And that I believe we have arrived at," said Nicomède, reassured by Laborde's presence. "I am accepted, eh, mademoiselle?"

"I have already given you my hand, sir," she replied.

"But not your heart; can you not give me that?"

"Don't press her too much just now," whispered Laborde. "Her heart will be yours in due time."

"Nobody has a heart now-a-days,' cried little Catherine, "therefore nobody can give one away. It is extremely bad taste in you, sir, to ask Colombe for what she hasn't got—positively bourgeois."

"I bow to the correction," replied Nicomède. "If nobody has a heart, I certainly can't expect one. But from my own feelings I fancy I must be an exception to the rule. I admit the impropriety of my request, mademoiselle," he added to Colombe, "and apologise for it. All I desire is an assurance on your part——"

"That you've already got, my good friend," interrupted Laborde. "Be content—pray be content."

"I merely wish to be satisfied I'm not disagreeable," persisted Nicomède. "Am I disagreeable, mademoiselle?"

"How can you ask such a silly question, sir?" interposed Catherine. "If I were Colombe, I'd tell you the truth."

"I advise you to ask no more questions," said Laborde. "My daughter accepts you, that is all you require."

"But let me have one word from your own lips—a single word, Colombe," said Nicomède, venturing to take her hand. "You agree to be my wife?"

"I do," she replied, in a low, faint voice.

"Enough!" cried Nicomède, rapturously.

"Oh dear! I wish you hadn't uttered those words," exclaimed Catherine.

"All being now satisfactorily settled, it is unnecessary to prolong the interview," said Laborde. "I have business at the Bank which must be attended to. Excuse me for hurrying you away, my dear son-in-law that is to be. Minor matters can be arranged hereafter."

"Adieu, mademoiselle," said Nicomède. "I shall have the honour of waiting upon you at this hour to-morrow."

Colombe tried to say she would be happy to see him, but her lips refused utterance to the words, and Nicomède was preparing to depart, when the door opened, and Evelyn Harcourt, unannounced, entered the room.

Attired in a riding-habit of green velvet, richly embroidered with gold, and high boots, he made a very gallant appearance, and offered an extraordinary contrast to Cossard. Without noticing any one else, he marched straight up to Colombe.

"I should have been here two hours ago," he said to her, "but I was invited by the Regent to breakfast at La Muette, and could not disobey. But I left the royal hunting-party in the Bois de Boulogne, and rode hither as fast as my horse could carry me."

"Would you had come two hours ago, Evelyn!" said Colombe, in a low voice. "This might then have been avoided."

"This avoided!" exclaimed Evelyn, looking round uneasily. "What has happened? Who is that person with your father?"

"That person," said Colombe—"that person is—I cannot, cannot tell you."

"But I will," interposed Catherine. "That person, M. Nicomède Cossard, is to be her husband. She has just accepted him."

"Colombe, this is not true?—Unsay it! unsay it!" cried Evelyn, despairingly.

"It is true," she rejoined.

"I shall go mad!" cried Evelyn. "Why, I am come to ask your hand in marriage."

"You are too late!" cried Colombe.

And she would have fallen to the ground if he had not caught her in his arms.

End of the Third Book.

BOOK IV.—THE COMPAGNIE D'OCCIDENT.

I.

HOW THE DUC DE NOAILLES AND THE CHANCELLOR D'AGUESSEAU RESIGNED OFFICE; AND HOW M. D'ARGENSON BECAME CHIEF OF THE COUNCIL OF FINANCE, AND KEEPER OF THE SEALS.

DURING the year and a half following its institution, Mr. Law's Bank continued to rise in credit and importance, and was constantly extending its operations. Received as cash at all the public offices, its notes were eagerly sought after, and preferred to specie — thus realising Law's prognostications. Moreover, the large deposits of gold and silver continually made at the Bank, under the eye of the public, removed all doubts as to the solvency of the establishment. Distrust, in fact, had long since disappeared, and given way to the blindest confidence. In eighteen months, Mr. Law had changed the whole aspect of affairs, had immensely increased the circulation, restored credit, revived trade, and given a new and strong impulse to every kind of industry.

Completely fascinated by Law, the Regent abandoned himself to his guidance in all financial matters, aided the Bank by edicts expressly designed to extend its operations and sustain its credit, and would long ere this have placed the entire control of the finances in his favourite's hands, if Law had not been a foreigner and a heretic

and incapable, therefore, of holding office in the government.

France, at the period in question, had large possessions in America. Not only did the whole state of Louisiana belong to her, but she owned the enormous region watered by the Mississippi and its confluent rivers. Some thirty-seven years previously, a celebrated traveller, the Chevalier La Salle, had obtained from Louis XIV. the privilege of exploring and colonising this then unknown and savage country. After connecting the great lakes by a chain of forts, the intrepid colonist descended the Mississippi to its embouchure in the Gulf of Mexico, being the first to accomplish the hazardous voyage, and, taking possession of the country he had traversed, as representative of his sovereign, he bestowed upon it the musical name of Louisiana. But La Salle did not reap the reward of his discovery, being treacherously murdered, and his infant colony disappeared. During the continuance of the war that prevailed for many subsequent years, no fresh attempt was made to colonise Louisiana, the English cruisers, by their activity, cutting off all trade with this portion of America; but peace being established in 1712, Antoine Crozat, an enterprising merchant, who had enriched himself by great maritime speculations, purchased from the king the exclusive right of trading with Louisiana for fifteen years. Large sums were expended by Crozat and his company, vessels fitted out, and free passages given to intending colonists; but the gigantic scheme failed, and threatened to become ruinous to its bold originator, who, however, contrived to liberate himself from further responsibility by relinquishing his monopoly to the Duc de Noailles and the Chamber of Justice.

But the acquisition, so far from being serviceable to the Council of Finance, embarrassed them greatly. They did not dare to prosecute Crozat's colonial schemes. While debating the matter, it occurred to the Duc de Noailles that he might get rid of the difficulty, and gratify his revenge at the same time, by offering the

ruinous monopoly to Law, who might possibly fall into the snare, and accept it. After consulting with the Chancellor D'Aguesseau, who shared his dislike of the great Scottish financier, and who had vehemently opposed the Regent's design of taking the Bank into his own hands, it was decided that it would be safest to make the proposition through his highness, since, if he favoured the project, Law would be certain to adopt it. Accordingly, Noailles and the chancellor had a private interview with the Regent, who seemed greatly pleased with their proposition, and enjoined their attendance on the following day, when Law could be present to receive the offer. Satisfied that their point was gained, the two wily ministers withdrew.

Next day, at the appointed hour, they were ushered into the Regent's cabinet. Besides Law, whom they expected to meet, there were present the Abbé Dubois and Antoine Crozat.

Of late the Regent's manner had been somewhat cold towards both ministers—strong suspicions, almost amounting to certainty, of their disloyalty to him having been roused in his breast by certain revelations of Dubois—but on this occasion his deportment towards them was particularly gracious and affable.

At once addressing himself to the matter in hand, his highness informed them that he had mentioned to the Sieur Law their proposal to cede to him the monopoly of the trade to Louisiana, but had forborne to employ any arguments to influence his decision.

Thanking his highness for the interest he had taken in the affair, the Duc de Noailles turned to Law and said, "I trust his highness has told you, M. Law, what I asserted yesterday, and what I now repeat, that no one is so capable of conducting this great commercial enterprise as yourself; and the Council of Finance feel that in making a concession of the monopoly to you, they will ensure the success of a project which must prove in the highest degree advantageous to the kingdom. That this large portion of the New World, which possesses lakes

like inland seas, an enormous river flowing into the Gulf of Mexico, mountains abounding with precious metals, plains covered with forests, prairies of extraordinary fertility—that such a country, boasting such immense natural advantages, must, if colonised, yield incalculable results, we do not doubt; and though the undertaking has proved too much for your predecessor, M. Crozat, we are confident it will not prove too much for you."

"I am clearly of opinion," added D'Aguesseau, "that it is reserved for the Sieur Law to accomplish the great work commenced by the unfortunate Chevalier La Salle, and continued by the enterprising gentleman," bowing to Crozat, "whom I see before me."

"I am flattered by the terms in which you speak of me," observed Law, "but it would be presumption on my part to hope for success where one so skilful and enterprising as M. Crozat has failed."

"I laboured under many disadvantages, M. Law, which you, who enjoy his highness's support, will not experience," said Crozat. "But I never despaired of ultimate success."

"I would appeal to M. Crozat, who can now give an unbiased opinion upon the matter," said Noailles, "whether in describing Louisiana I have exaggerated its colonial advantages."

"On the contrary, M. le Duc, you have understated them," replied Crozat. "It is not possible to over-estimate the natural wealth of Louisiana. When a city shall be built at the mouth of the Mississippi; and when the country through which that mighty river flows shall be colonised, incalculable wealth will accrue to France. Such is my firm conviction, and while lamenting that I have lacked the power to carry out my own scheme, I shall rejoice if it falls into abler hands."

"You compliment me too much, M. Crozat," said Law. "But since you have relinquished the scheme, it must be carried out, and as I feel as strongly as yourself the enormous advantage to this country of a colony like that of Louisiana, I will unhesitatingly undertake the onerous

task. I will build a beautiful city at the mouth of the Mississippi, and will call it, after the illustrious Regent of France, New Orléans. To carry out my great design, I will forthwith establish a company, to be styled the Compagnie d'Occident, with a capital of a hundred millions, divided into two hundred thousand shares of five hundred livres each, payable in billets d'état."

"While I am delighted with your acceptance of our offer, M. Law, and very favourably impressed by your plan of the Compagnie d'Occident," remarked Noailles, "I may be permitted to observe, that there being now a loss of seventy per cent. on the billets d'état, the actual payment for each share will be only one hundred and fifty livres, not five hundred. However, that is your affair."

"So long as four per cent. is regularly paid by the Treasury on the billets d'état, I shall not care for the deficit you mention, M. le Duc," rejoined Law. "But I will engage not only to absorb one hundred millions of these notes in the Compagnie d'Occident, but to raise the surplus to par."

"What say you to that, duke?" demanded the Regent, laughing.

"Mere fanfaronade," muttered Noailles, shrugging his shoulders.

"I will only say that if the Sieur Law can accomplish such a feat, he will deserve a statue," observed D'Aguesseau.

"And he shall have one, and in the finest place in Paris," rejoined the Regent.

"And now, M. Law," pursued his highness, addressing him, "since you have accepted the offer made you by the Council of Finance, and have explained your views, I promise you, on the part of his Majesty, letters patent in the form of an edict, which shall empower you to establish a great commercial company, under the denomination proposed by yourself, of the Compagnie d'Occident. And in consideration of the services which his Majesty anticipates you will render to France by the Compagnie d'Occident, he will accord you for twenty-five years the exclusive right

of trading with Louisiana, will engage to maintain freedom of commerce and navigation to your company, and protect it by force of arms, if need be, against all nations that may seek to interfere with it."

"Indeed, monseigneur!—this is much—too much!" exclaimed D'Aguesseau.

"Furthermore," pursued the Regent, without deigning to notice the chancellor's remark, "in order to encourage the Compagnie d'Occident, his Majesty will confer upon it the exclusive privilege of trading in the furs of Canada, will diminish in its favour the custom-house dues, and grant a large premium to each of its ships which shall sail for the first time to one of its ports."

"Is this all, monseigneur?" inquired the Duc de Noailles, as the Regent paused for a moment.

"No," replied his highness. "The Compagnie d'Occident shall not only have sovereign authority, but the insignia of royalty, and shall bear for its proud blazon an old river—the Mississippi—leaning on a horn of abundance, with golden fleurs-de-lis in chief, and a crown tréflée."

"I have listened to all that your highness has advanced," said D'Aguesseau, gravely, "and I must now offer a respectful remonstrance. The sovereign privileges you propose to confer upon the Compagnie d'Occident will place too much power in the hands of its governor."

"I also must oppose the grant," said Noailles. "Unless the privileges to be accorded to the Sieur Law are limited to the extent of those heretofore conferred upon M. Crozat, I cannot sanction the edict proposed by your highness."

"But it is only by the enjoyment of such privileges that I can hope for success, M. le Duc," remarked Law

"Perhaps not, sir," rejoined Noailles; "but better you should fail than France suffer injury. It is my duty to warn his highness against placing unlimited power in the hands of a stranger—and it may be a secret enemy of France."

"An enemy of France!" exclaimed Law, indignantly. "My conduct is open to no such suspicion, M. le Duc,

and I must require you to retract the unwarrantable accusation."

"Retractation is needless, M. Law," said the Regent. "The charge is absurd, and the duke's motive in making it too apparent to allow it to weigh with me for a moment."

"Without going so far as the Duc de Noailles, and having no apprehension of any secret designs against this country on the part of the Sieur Law," observed D'Aguesseau, "I hold it to be extremely unwise, if not absolutely dangerous, to place such power as would be conferred by the proposed edict in the hands of any individual."

"What means this sudden change, messieurs?" said Dubois, looking at them curiously. "You came here anxious to get rid of a bad bargain, and having found a purchaser, would tie his hands. A short time ago the Sieur Law was the only person who could conduct the trade of Louisiana. Now you denounce him as an enemy of France."

"I would not trust him too far," said Noailles, bluntly.

"Nor I," added the chancellor.

"In other words, you will only allow him to ruin himself," rejoined Dubois. "Your offer of the Louisiana trade was a trap, in which you have been caught yourselves. M. Law *will* succeed with the Compagnie d'Occident."

"At all events, I shall try to ensure his success," said the Regent. "I cannot listen to these remonstrances. The letters patent conferring sovereign powers on the Compagnie d'Occident will forthwith be issued. M. Law will be uncontrolled director."

"Apparently I have forfeited your highness's favour, since my advice is unheeded," murmured Noailles.

"If my counsel is of such little weight, it is clear I must be unfit for the office I hold, monseigneur," said D'Aguesseau. "I must beg, therefore, to resign the seals."

"I accept your resignation, sir," rejoined the Regent, coldly.

"Under these circumstances, monseigneur, and as I have

acted in this matter with the chancellor," said Noailles, "I have no alternative but to retire from the Council of Finance."

"Pray do so, M. le Duc," said the Regent.

"If the Sieur Law, as a stranger, were not disqualified from being minister of finance, I might think your highness designed my post for him," observed Noailles, sarcastically.

"I have other views, sir," said the Regent, haughtily.

"If his highness cannot make M. Law minister of finance, M. le Duc," remarked Dubois, "there is nothing to prevent him from being guided by the advice of so able a counsellor."

"I cannot congratulate his highness upon his secret counsellors," retorted Noailles. "But though you, M. l'Abbé, do not labour under the same disability as M. Law, I would recommend you to keep in the background. Your entrance into the Council will be marked by the desertion of all the important persons in the kingdom."

No reply to this keen sarcasm was made by Dubois, except a look, which the Duc de Noailles ever afterwards remembered, and with reason.

"I do not think you will complain of my choice of your successor, duke," said the Regent.

"I am curious to know whom your highness will honour with the appointment," said Noailles.

"The first to enter the cabinet shall have it," said the Regent, hearing a slight noise outside.

As the words were uttered, the folding-doors were thrown wide open by the usher, who announced, in a loud voice, M. d'Argenson.

"D'Argenson!" whispered Noailles to D'Aguesseau. "I see it all now. Our dismissal was planned."

"I guessed what was coming, and therefore tendered my resignation," said the other, in the same tone.

The lieutenant-general of police looked dark and stern, as usual, and nothing could be read in his inflexible features.

"I want a chief of the Council of Finances," said the Regent to him.

"I am ready to take the office, monseigneur," replied D'Argenson.

"There is your commission, sir," said the duke, signing the warrant, and delivering it to D'Argenson, who received it with a stiff inclination of his person. "Your place is soon filled, you perceive, M. le Duc," the Regent added to Noailles.

"There could not be much difficulty in filling it, monseigneur, since the matter was pre-arranged," replied the duke.

"There is yet another vacancy," said the Regent. "I want a keeper of the seals."

"The office will exactly suit me," replied D'Argenson.

"Of course it will," said D'Aguesseau. "He will take all the offices of State, if they are offered him."

Meantime, the Regent signed another commission, and handed it to D'Argenson, who received it with a stiff bow, like the first.

"Your highness will have a very able minister of finance, as well as a very efficient keeper of the seals," said Noailles. "He will receive inspiration on the one hand from M. Law, and on the other from the Abbé Dubois." And with a profound salutation he retired with D'Aguesseau, observing to the latter, as they quitted the cabinet, "We have been out-manœuvred, but we will have our revenge."

At the same time, M. Crozat made a profound reverence to the Regent, and withdrew.

"Our next conflict will be with the parliament," observed Dubois. "There M. Law's enemies will carry on the war against him."

"I laugh at their malice," said Law. "No personal apprehensions shall deter me from putting my grand project into execution. I have already explained to his highness," he added to D'Argenson, "that I design gradually to extinguish the discredited State paper, and shall absorb two-fifths of the notes by employing them in the Compangie d'Occident."

"I will extinguish the whole debt by a masterstroke,"

said D'Argenson. "Let an edict be issued raising the value of the silver marc from forty to sixty livres. I will procure ingots, which can be coined at the rate of sixty livres to the marc. Let the edict further enjoin that forty-eight livres in specie, weighing nine ounces and a half, with twelve livres in State notes, shall be brought to obtain the new money. By this means we shall gain the sixth part of the specie, and the whole of the notes."

"I dislike the plan," said Law. "If put into execution, it will cause general and just indignation. It is unworthy in a State so to pay its debts."

"I cannot oppose the first scheme proposed by my new minister of finance," said the Regent. "The measure certainly does not meet with my entire approval, but let it be tried."

"I think it right to state to your highness that it will be seriously detrimental to my system," remonstrated Law. "The public will imagine that I have instigated the measure, whereas I am strenuously opposed to it."

"I have not accepted the important offices to which it has pleased his highness to appoint me, with the intention of being the mere automaton described by the Duc de Noailles," said D'Argenson. "The plan is mine, and I will take its entire responsibility."

"It will inevitably bring us into collision with the parliament," said Law. "They will refuse to register the edict."

"Let them do so, and set their authority at defiance," said D'Argenson. "The power of the parliament must be controlled."

"On that point I am clearly of your opinion," rejoined the Regent. "At all hazards the edict shall be issued. And at the same time you shall have the letters patent for the Compagnie d'Occident," he added to Law.

With this the conference came to an end.

II.

HOW LAW WAS SAVED BY A COUP D'ÉTAT.

As Law had foreseen, the promulgation of the edict recommended by D'Argenson, enjoining a new coinage of specie in the proportion of sixty livres to the silver marc, thus occasioning a diminution of nearly fifty per cent. on the money already reduced in value by a previous recoinage, roused popular irritation to such a point as almost to threaten a revolution. The parliament of Paris, which for some time had set itself in opposition to the Regent, now declared open war, by issuing a decree prohibiting all persons from receiving the new money. This decree was instantly annulled by the Regent, as derogatory to the royal authority, and all printers were interdicted, on pain of death, from reproducing it; but the parliament was not to be daunted, and placarded written copies on the walls. The capitalists quickly took the alarm, and all monetary transactions sustained a severe check. A deputation from the parliament, headed by the president, De Mesmes, waited upon the Regent at the Palais Royal, but were coldly received, and dismissed without any concession made to them. The populace now began to murmur, and fresh fears of an outbreak were entertained.

Determined to crush the revolt in the bud, the Regent caused the Mint and Mr. Law's Bank, both of which had been threatened with pillage, to be occupied by troops, and then publicly proclaimed that the obnoxious law would be enforced. At the same time, a detachment of musqueteers was sent to the Palais de Justice to seize the parliamentary presses, while other officers were despatched to the markets to compel all reluctant persons to take the new money. After a long struggle, during which the Regent, acting throughout by the advice of D'Argenson, continued inflexible, the parliament brought the matter to an

issue by an ordinance launched against Law, prohibiting all persons employed in the Bank from receiving or holding any of the royal funds, and reviving an obsolete statute, by which any stranger was prohibited, under severe penalties, from interfering, directly or indirectly, with the management and administration of the royal funds. This offensive ordinance was instantly annulled, and the Regent turned his back upon the president, De Mesmes, who waited upon him. Efforts were then made to excite a popular tumult, and, but for the firmness displayed by D'Argenson, might have been successful. A report was industriously circulated that Law had been arrested by the officers of parliament, and was about to be hanged privately in the court of the Palais de Justice. Happily, the report was destitute of foundation, but as in the present temper of the populace apprehensions might reasonably be entertained for the great financier's safety, he was advised by D'Argenson to seek an asylum in the Palais Royal. Things had now come to such a pass, that nothing was left to save Law and his Bank except a coup d'état, and this ultimatum was decided upon by the Regent.

Next morning, at the early hour of six, the members of the Chambers were summoned in the king's name to attend a lit de justice at the Tuileries at ten o'clock, and after some hesitation complied, repairing thither on foot in their scarlet robes. Effectual steps had been taken by D'Argenson to prevent resistance. Troops were in readiness everywhere. Before daybreak the regiment of Guards had been marched out. The Carrousel and the Hôtel de Soubise were occupied by the military. Probably, owing to these preparations, and the dread inspired by D'Argenson's determined character, tranquillity continued undisturbed.

Though completely in ignorance of the Regent's designs, the parliament could not fail to discern in the downcast looks of its partisans, the Duc de Noailles and D'Aguesseau, in the absence of the Duc de Maine and the Comte de Toulouse, in the raised seats assigned to the peers, and, above all, in the sternly triumphant looks

of D'Argenson, that a heavy blow was intended against them. It soon came. After a discourse full of bitter invective, pronounced by D'Argenson, the young king, then eight years of age, speaking from the throne, told the parliament it was his sovereign pleasure that the edict, to which they had hitherto refused assent, should be forthwith registered.

Upon this, the president, M. de Mesmes, with the whole of the Chambers, prostrated themselves humbly before the youthful monarch, and besought him to give them time for consideration. But he had been too well schooled by his uncle to yield to their supplications, and peremptorily refused. An end was put to the scene by D'Argenson, who exclaimed, in a loud, authoritative voice, "Le Roi veut être obéi, et obéi sur-le-champ." Whereupon, without more ado, the edict was registered. A complete victory over the parliament was thus gained by the Council of Regency. The peers and dukes recovered their right to assist at a lit de justice, seated and covered; the princes legitimatised by Louis XIV. were deprived of the high privileges conferred upon them, and reduced to the rank of peers; while the superintendence of the education of the youthful king was transferred from the Duc de Maine to the Duc de Bourbon. But the Regent, not content with mere victory, punished three of the most obstinate of the offenders by sending them as prisoners to the isles of Sainte-Marguerite.

After this defeat of the parliament, combined with the discomfiture of his enemies, the Duc de Noailles and D'Aguesseau, both of whom were exiled from court, Law was enabled to pursue his System unmolested, and he addressed himself vigorously to the establishment of the Compagnie d'Occident, which had been necessarily suspended during the protracted conflict. The company was quickly formed, and as quickly commenced operations; but before particularising them, we must advert to another highly important step taken by the Regent and his counsellor. This was the conversion of the General Bank into a Royal

Bank—the change being effected in a rather irregular and underhand manner.

A secret council was held by the Regent at the Palais Royal, consisting of the Duc de Bourbon, chief of the Council of Regency, the Duc d'Antin, minister for the Home Department, and D'Argenson. Of late the chancellor had conceived a secret jealousy of Law, as he discovered that the Scottish financier possessed a much larger share of the Regent's confidence than he himself did, and it was highly mortifying to him to find that he had been summoned to approve a new scheme destined still further to aggrandise his rival. He listened, therefore, with secret displeasure to the perusal of an edict prepared by Law, by which it was ordained that the king should take the General Bank into his own hands, under the denomination of the Royal Bank, should reimburse the shareholders, and become answerable for the outstanding notes, amounting to fifty-nine millions of livres. It was furthermore declared by the edict that it was his Majesty's sovereign will and pleasure that the Sieur John Law should be director-general of the Royal Bank, and that branches should be fixed at Lyons, Rochelle, Tours, Orléans, and Amiens.

The Duc de Bourbon, who had already benefited largely by Law's projects, and who looked for still greater gains as the System proceeded, at once sanctioned the edict. So did the Duc d'Antin, who was an obsequious courtier, and, moreover, entertained a high opinion of Law's capacities. But D'Argenson hesitated, and even uttered a remonstrance. A half menace, however, from the Regent, who would now brook no opposition, decided him, and he reluctantly yielded assent.

Thus irregularly passed, the edict became a State-law, and the Royal Bank was established.

But though D'Argenson succumbed, he was deeply offended, and from that moment Law had to encounter his secret but determined opposition.

III.

THE ANTI-SYSTEM.

THE Royal Bank, of which Law had been appointed director-general, was opened in the ancient Hôtel Mazarin, a vast palace, formerly belonging to the celebrated cardinal of that name, now appropriated to the Bibliothèque Impériale, standing between the Rue de Richelieu and the Rue Vivienne, and running in a lateral direction towards the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs.

Behind this magnificent palace, on the side of the Rue Vivienne, was an extensive garden, protected from the street by a high wall, in the centre of which were large iron gates. Within the palace, besides many noble apartments, was a grand gallery, built by Cardinal Mazarin, skirting the Rue de Richelieu as far as the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, and at present devoted to the superb collection of prints and manuscripts belonging to the Bibliothèque Impériale. Here were placed the bureaux and counters of the Royal Bank, access to them being from the Rue Vivienne, through the gate before mentioned.

In this spacious edifice, which cost Law upwards of a million livres, ample room was afforded, not only for the Royal Bank, but for the Compagnie d'Occident, the approach to the bureaux and cabinets of the latter establishment being through a grand portal in the Rue Richelieu, above which were emblazoned the arms of the company —namely, the Mississippi leaning on a horn of abundance. On the death of Cardinal Mazarin, his splendid palace had been divided, and the portion allotted to the Compagnie d'Occident was known as the Hôtel de Nevers.

Everything connected with both branches of the System was conducted upon a princely scale, an immense number of officials being employed by the director-general. Uncontrolled power was exercised by him over both

departments, and the order and regularity marking all their proceedings attested the excellence of his management. The gigantic and complicated machinery of both Bank and Company moved with the ease and exactitude of clockwork.

The administrative council of the Compagnie d'Occident comprehended thirty directors, presided over by Law. With him every plan originated, or received his sanction prior to adoption. Mere puppets in his hands, the directors, like the employés, were ever ready to do his bidding.

The reimbursement of the shareholders of the general Bank was effected through Law's instrumentality, in a manner wonderfully advantageous to that body, and instead of being aggrieved by the arrangement, they had abundant reason to be satisfied. The 1200 shares of 5000 livres each, which formed its original capital, were purchased by the government at par, but as the shareholders had not actually paid more than 800 livres on each share, their gains were prodigious—not less, indeed, than 4200 livres on each share! Never before had such enormous profit been realised—enough to turn the heads of all who heard of it!

In introducing M. Nicomède Cossard, we had occasion to mention that he was one of the largest shareholders in the Bank. Consequently, the arrangement just described was extraordinarily beneficial to him. All his gains, and a good deal more, were now invested in actions of the Compagnie d'Occident, of which, by favour of Law, he had been appointed a director. Laborde, also, was a considerable shareholder in the company, and a director, and both he and his intended son-in-law had entire faith in its success. This confidence did credit to their discrimination, since for a time the company languished, owing to the prejudices existing against the colony; prejudices which could not be overcome, even by the most brilliant representations of its natural wealth and commercial capabilities.

To stimulate the public, and add to the resources of

the company, Law purchased the monopoly of the fabrication and sale of tobacco, one of the royal farms, for a term of nine years, at an annual rent of two millions; and the arrangement eventually proved highly advantageous, since extensive plantations had already been commenced in Louisiana, and its tobacco was considered superior to that of Virginia. He next bought for 1,600,000 livres the charter and effects of the Senegal Company, by which means he obtained the exclusive privilege of the Guinea trade, together with an immense store of merchandise, and eleven vessels fully equipped.

But while the director-general was strengthening the company by these important acquisitions, a serious opposition had arisen. A scheme known as the Anti-System was secretly concocted between the Chancellor D'Argenson and the Messieurs Paris—four brothers, sprung from a very humble stock in Dauphiny, who, by their remarkable enterprise and ability, employed in the service of the state during the late reign, had become large capitalists. This scheme, it was confidently anticipated, would paralyse, if not destroy Law's company.

At the time of which we write, the right of recovering the revenues arising from the state-imposts was invariably let to associations of financiers, under the designation of "Fermes Générales;" and as the power of renewing the leases rested with D'Argenson, in his capacity of chief minister of finance, he exercised it in favour of his coadjutors, assigning the taxes upon salt, the import and export duties (*aides, traites et gabelles*), with other imposts comprised in the state-farms, to the Frères Paris, for a term of six years, at an annual rental of forty-eight millions.

An admirable basis being thus obtained for the operation, a company was immediately formed by the Frères Paris upon the precise plan of the Compagnie d'Occident, with a capital of the same amount as that company, divided into 100,000 shares of 1000 livres each, and offering the revenues of the state-farms as a guarantee for the regular payment of its dividends. The latter recommendation gave the fermes générales a decided ad-

vantage over the Occident, the chief security of which was a distant and almost unproductive colony, and the effect became speedily manifest in the decline of Law's shares, and the rise of those of his opponents. Moreover, while Law only paid four per cent., his rivals promised twelve or fifteen. With such advantages, the Anti-System could not but prove a formidable antagonist to the System.

The tide of prosperity which had hitherto borne Law on, appeared now to have turned, and his credit began slightly to wane. Some even of the directors of the Compagnie d'Occident felt uneasy, but their misgivings were not shared by Laborde and Cossard, both of whom, as we have said, felt certain that their leader would weather the storm, and safely reach the haven for which he was bound.

They were right. While the promoters of the Anti-System were congratulating themselves upon a speedy and complete victory, Law was meditating fresh projects for the aggrandisement of his company, and the extinction of all rivalry against it.

One day, when he was at the Palais Royal, closeted with the Regent, D'Argenson entered the cabinet, and could not refrain from taunting him with his inability to make good his promise to raise the shares of his company to par.

"That tour de force was to have been performed months ago," remarked the minister of finance, with a sneer; "but it seems less likely of accomplishment than ever, now that you have got a formidable opposition in the Anti-System."

"The Anti-System does not give me the slightest uneasiness," rejoined Law. "If I had thought fit, I could have easily crushed it at the commencement. But I was willing to let the Frères Paris try their hand—and they have really done exceedingly well—with *your* assistanc —always with *your* assistance, M. le Ministre."

"You give me more credit than I deserve, M. Law," said the other. "I have lent no aid to the Frères Paris,

beyond accepting their very advantageous tender for the state-farms, thereby providing their company with a guarantee, which, to judge from results, the public seem greatly to prefer to the unprofitable colony of the Mississippi. Captain Lamothe Cadillac, who has just returned from Louisiana, gives deplorable accounts of the country."

"Captain Lamothe Cadillac is a hireling of the Frères Paris," said Law.

"You say so because his statements are not agreeable to you, but I believe them to be correct," rejoined D'Argenson. "It is to be hoped you may be able to maintain your ground, M. Law. That your rivals will do so, there can be little doubt."

"You will change your opinion before long, sir," remarked Law. "The promoters of the Anti-System have played their best cards, so the game is mine. I am really obliged to you for reminding me of the pledge I gave the Duc de Noailles to raise the shares to par."

"I ought to apologise for the liberty," said D'Argenson. "But no one expects you to make good an idle boast. We all know you *would* raise the shares—if you *could*."

"To show how erroneous your notions are, sir," returned Law, "I undertake before his highness to buy all those shares at par, at six months' date, with a premium of forty per cent., which I shall be content to lose if I do not fulfil my engagement at the period fixed."

"Eh! what?—do I hear aright?" cried D'Argenson. "You engage to pay a hundred livres in six months, for a share now worth only sixty, and to give forty livres premium? Is it so?"

"Precisely," replied Law. "And when my offer is publicly announced, you will see the effect it will have upon the shares. I recommend you to buy as many as you can—and quickly. Two hundred at the present price will realise fifty thousand livres in six months. Think of that, M. le Chancelier."

"I am lost in amazement," exclaimed D'Argenson, stupified. "I never heard of such a *marché à prime*. It appears to me like a gamester's last stake."

"Ask your friends, the Frères Paris, what they think of my offer, M. le Ministre," said Law. "They will guess its meaning. To do them justice, they are shrewd, far-sighted men."

"A propos of the Frères Paris!" remarked the Regent. "Is it true, M. le Chancelier, that you received from them a bonus of three hundred thousand livres on renewing the lease of the fermes générales?"

"I received the customary bonus, monseigneur,—nothing more," replied D'Argenson.

The Regent and Law exchanged a glance, which did not escape the chancellor.

"Had you tenders from any other capitalists besides the Frères Paris?" pursued the Regent.

"None so advantageous as theirs, monseigneur," was the reluctant reply.

"Not so advantageous, perhaps, to *yourself*, sir," remarked the Regent, sharply.

"Theirs was the highest tender I had, monseigneur," rejoined D'Argenson.

"Hum!" ejaculated the Regent, incredulously.

"Your highness seems to doubt my assertion," cried the chancellor.

"Competition was not permitted," said Law. "Had intimation been vouchsafed me that the leases of the farms would be renewed, I would have given a far higher rental for them than that obtained."

"But not a larger bonus to the minister," said the Regent, pointedly.

"The farms are safely let, and at their full value," rejoined D'Argenson.

"But more, it seems, might have been got for them," said the Regent. "M. Law, I think, has a right to complain that notice of the intended renewal was not given him. It would serve you right were I to compel you to annul the contract you have made. What term have you granted?"

"Six years, monseigneur," replied D'Argenson. "And I repeat, the farms are extremely well let. The success

of the Frères Paris justifies the opinion I formed of them Your highness, I trust, will not interfere with the arrangement?"

"I make no promise," replied the Regent, coldly. "It is perfectly clear that the scheme has been got up with the design of injuring M. Law, and you cannot wonder if reprisals are made. The Frères Paris need expect no consideration from me."

"But they may expect justice, monseigneur."

"Justice they shall have—strict justice," said the Regent.

And signifying to D'Argenson that his audience was at an end, the chancellor bowed, and left the cabinet.

"I think I have frightened him," said the Regent, with a laugh, as soon as the chancellor was gone. "He will carry consternation into the enemies' camp. An end must be put to these intrigues and cabals. Who is the Captain Lamothe Cadillac he spoke of?"

"An old officer, who has been for many years in the Mississippi, monseigneur. The Frères Paris have hired him to run down the colony, and he goes about to all the cafés, and does considerable mischief by his talk. We have tried to silence him, but he is stupid and impracticable, and cannot be induced to hold his tongue."

"Shut him up in the Bastille," said the Regent. "Take this lettre de cachet," he added, filling up a warrant and handing it to him.

Ere Law could depart on his errand, he was stopped by the Duc de Bourbon, who at this moment entered the cabinet with the Duc d'Antin and the Duc de la Force.

"Ah! M. Law," cried M. le Duc, after making a reverence to the Regent, "we have just heard a most extraordinary piece of intelligence from D'Argenson, and are come to ascertain if it is true."

"If he has told you, M. le Duc," said Law, "that I have engaged to buy the shares of the Compagnie d'Occident at par, at six months' date, with forty livres premium on each share, he has stated the truth. I dare say he added that I must be mad to make the offer; and very likely you concur with him in opinion."

"I own I scarcely supposed the offer could be serious," replied the Duc de Bourbon.

"It is perfectly serious," said Law. "I shall be ready to fulfil my marché à prime. How many shares have you, M. le Duc?"

"Let me see," replied the other, consulting his tablets. "Eight hundred, for which I have paid 240,000 livres."

"And for which you will receive 400,000 livres in six months, being a profit of 160,000 livres. The latter sum shall be paid down as a premium."

"Whatever happens, you will be on the right side, M. le Duc," observed the Regent, laughing.

"I have two hundred shares, M. Law," said the Duc de la Force.

"And I a hundred," added D'Antin.

"I will purchase them on the same terms I have offered M. le Duc," observed Law. "But if his grace and you will permit me to advise you, you will keep them, and buy more. It is against my own interest to give you this counsel, but I feel bound to tell you that if you sell now, you will assuredly regret the step."

"Then I will keep my shares," said the Duc de la Force.

"And so will I," added D'Antin.

"You are wise," observed Law. "What is your determination, M. le Duc?"

"To sell," replied the Duc de Bourbon. "The premium is an irresistible temptation."

"As you please," said Law. "But what will you say if those shares should make two hundred per cent.?" he added, in a whisper. "You will then regret having parted with them."

"Two hundred per cent.! Is there any chance of it?' inquired the duke.

"The thing is certain," replied Law.

"Then I hold. I won't sell," cried the duke. "We live in an age of wonders. I owe twenty millions, but I begin to think that, with your assistance, M. Law, I shall be able to pay my creditors."

"We are all in debt. We all want money. I am ashamed to confess how much I owe," said the Duc de la Force. "But my hope is in M. Law. Therefore I support his System."

"Yes, yes, we all support the System," rejoined D'Antin. "I believe in it as faithfully as a devout Mussulman does in the Koran."

"And you are right," observed the Regent. "I am in M. Law's secret, and know the marvels he is certain to perform. I believe he can help you to pay your debts, M. le Duc, prodigious as you tell us they are, and enable you to rebuild Chantilly."

"If M. le Duc will do me the honour to consult me, I will endeavour to direct his speculations towards the desired end," said Law.

"Be certain I will," cried the duke, eagerly. "Whatever you advise I will do. Then you think there is a chance of my being able to pay off——"

"A very good chance, M. le Duc," replied Law. "But you must be content to wait for a few months. When the opportunity offers I will not neglect it. Meantime, I trust I may venture to count on your grace's support?"

"On my entire support, M. Law—in *all* your projects," replied the duke, emphatically.

"I need not assure you that you may count on mine, M. Law," said the Duc de la Force. "You have had it on all occasions."

"I make no professions, but M. Law knows he can calculate on me," said D'Antin.

Estimating these assurances at their true worth, Law made a profound reverence to the Regent, and quitted the cabinet.

But he was detained in the ante-chamber. The few words as to the marché à prime, let fall by D'Argenson to the Duc de Bourbon, had been overheard, and caused an extraordinary sensation among the courtiers, and no sooner was Law perceived than a dense mass of titled personages pressed upon him, offering to sell their shares, and stunning

him by their vociferations. He could neither extricate himself nor obtain a hearing. If he addressed the marquis, who had caught hold of his arm, he was compelled to turn to the prince, who had possession of his shoulder. Those behind were just as eager and impatient as those in front, and he seemed in danger of suffocation. At last he was liberated by the intervention of the ushers, who called out that the doors of the Regent's cabinet were thrown open, whereupon his tormentors left him.

IV.

COMTE DE HORN AND CAPTAIN DE MILLE.

WHILE the Regent was taking his chocolate, and chatting with De Broglie, Nocé, Canillac, and others of his favourites, two important personages, namely, the Prince de Robecque-Montmorency and the Maréchal d'Isinghien approached him, and begged permission to present their young relative, the Comte Antoine-Joseph de Horn.

"My young kinsman," said Montmorency, "is a direct descendant of the famous Comte de Horn, who, I need scarcely remind your highness, mounted the scaffold prepared for him and his bosom friend, the illustrious Comte D'Egmont, by the sanguinary Duke of Alva, in the days of Philip the Second of Spain. Antoine de Horn is the second son of Emmanuel Philippe, Prince de Horn, and Antoinette, Princesse de Ligne, and is allied to the Emperor of Germany and other sovereign families. There is not a nobler house in Europe than that of Horn. The late prince, Philippe-Emmanuel, as your highness must be aware, served in France, with the rank of lieutenant-general, at the battles of Spire and Ramillies, and severely wounded and made prisoner at the latter

On the peace of Utrecht, when the Low Countries passed over to Austria, the house of Horn of course came under the domination of the Emperor, and Antoine is an officer of cavalry in his Imperial Majesty's service."

"You have omitted to mention that the Comte de Horn is a relative of my own, through my mother, Madame la Douairière," said the Regent. "Does he bring letters to me from his brother, Prince Maximilien?"

"I believe not, monseigneur," replied Montmorency.

"That is strange," remarked the Regent.

"It is easily explained, monseigneur," said the Maréchal D'Isinghien. "The brothers have quarrelled, as unfortunately brothers will sometimes quarrel, and the count, who is proud and high spirited, will neither ask, nor accept, a favour from the prince. To speak truth, for I need have no disguise with your highness, who is very lenient in such matters, the Comte de Horn is excessively fond of play, and has lost a good deal of money. Besides this, he has been engaged in some affairs of gallantry at Brussels, and these have given Prince Maximilien displeasure."

"From what you say, maréchal," observed the Regent, laughing, "the Comte de Horn is well qualified to be enrolled among my Roués. Where is he? Point him out to me."

"He is yonder, monseigneur—near the door, talking to the Duc d'Aremberg," replied D'Isinghien.

"I can't distinguish his features very clearly," said the Regent, who, we have already remarked, was almost purblind, "but he seems to have a handsome person and a good mien."

"The belles Bruxellaises deem him very handsome, monseigneur," replied D'Isinghien.

"And no doubt they are good judges. Well, present him."

The Comte de Horn, who shortly afterwards made his obeisance to the Regent, and was very graciously received, was tall and extremely well proportioned, but had more the look of a Spaniard than of a Fleming. In age he was about two-and-twenty. His physiognomy was re-

markable, and fixed the attention so strongly that it could not be easily forgotten. Perfectly oval in form, with regular features, large dark eyes, a firm mouth and white teeth, his countenance, though unquestionably handsome, had a sinister expression, which destroyed its beauty. His complexion was sallow, and by contrast added to the effect of his dark eyes and beetling brows. He wore a beard and moustaches à la Richelieu. His attire was of sky-blue silk, richly embroidered with silver. The finest Mechlin lace adorned his wrists and cravat, and a well-powdered and very becoming peruke, with a diamond-hilted sword, and shoes with diamond buckles and red heels, completed his costume. His manners were easy and graceful, and perfectly consistent with his high birth.

"You are welcome to Paris, M. le Comte," observed the Regent. "I suppose you have come hither merely in quest of amusement?"

"Not entirely, monseigneur," replied De Horn. "It is impossible, I conceive, to be in the gayest and pleasantest city in the world without being perfectly amused, whatever one's tastes may be, but I will frankly own that my chief object in visiting your capital is to make money. I have a modest pension—a very modest pension—of twelve thousand livres from my brother, Prince Maximilien, and I don't find it quite enough."

"You have come to the wrong place, M. le Comte," remarked the Regent. "You should go to London. You will find it easier to spend money than to make it in Paris."

"Unless I am misinformed, monseigneur, immense sums are just now made in the Rue Quincampoix."

"So they say," rejoined the Regent. "Are you usually lucky at play, count?"

"By no means, monseigneur. As a rule, fortune does not favour me. But I am not discouraged. I play on."

"Do you ever win?" asked the Regent.

"Rarely, I must own—very rarely."

"I thought so," remarked the Regent. "Such being the case, if you mean to speculate, I advise you to abstain altogether from the gaming-table."

"As well might I try to resist the allurements of beauty, or pass the brimming goblet untasted, as forswear cards and dice, monseigneur. I cannot do it. I hope M. Law, the financial conjuror, will provide me with funds, but play I must. Play is my master-passion, against which I feel it would be idle to contend, so I never make the attempt. Had it been possible to reclaim me from the evil habit, as he calls it, the prince my brother would have done so long ago. But lectures are of no avail with me."

"Hypocrisy, at all events, is not among your failings, M. le Comte," observed the Regent. "You must sup with me to-night, though I cannot promise you either biribi or lansquenet."

"Neither are needed, monseigneur. It is a privilege, indeed, to be your guest, of which I shall ever feel proud. I have heard the most wonderful accounts of your highness's suppers from my brother-officer, Captain de Mille."

"I do not remember that Captain de Mille ever supped with me," remarked the Regent. "Indeed, I never heard of him before."

"That is singular," said the count. "I understood him to say he has frequently been your highness's guest, and the details he gave of your inimitable entertainments seemed so accurate, that I felt convinced he must have been present on the occasions he referred to."

"Your friend was mystifying you, count."

"Perhaps your highness may have forgotten him?"

"Impossible! I never forget any one."

"Then I am really puzzled. If De Mille has boasted unwarrantably, as would appear, he deserves to be exposed. But the matter may be cleared up at once, with your highness's permission. Captain de Mille is without —in the ante-chamber."

"Let him come in, by all means," said the Regent. "I should like to see my unknown guest."

The Comte de Horn bowed, quitted the Regent's presence, and returned, in a few moments, with a tall, handsome young man, dressed with extreme richness and elegance.

Without manifesting the slightest embarrassment, this personage stepped forward, and made a profound obeisance to the Regent, who, recognising him at once, and astonished at his effrontery, did not deign to acknowledge the salutation.

"I acquit you of all blame in this improper proceeding, M. le Comte," said the Regent, sternly, to De Horn. "You must be unaware who you have brought before me."

"Monseigneur, this is Captain de Mille, of whom I spoke."

"He may think fit to style himself so, but his rightful name is Raoul Laborde. He has not deceived you in asserting that he has supped with me, but he ought to have explained that he has been banished for his misdoings from the Palais Royal. I have yet to consider in what manner I shall punish his present unauthorised intrusion."

"Before I am dismissed, I beseech your highness to hear my explanation," said De Mille. "On leaving Paris, after I had the misfortune to incur your highness's displeasure, I proceeded to Bruges, where I had an uncle on my mother's side, M. Laurent de Mille, and with him I at once found a home. He was unmarried, and in an infirm state of health at the time of my arrival, and died within two months, leaving me his heir, on condition that I should assume his name. This I now bear, and I have honourably distinguished it, as my papers will demonstrate to your highness. I am now a captain of cavalry in the Austrian service."

"I can corroborate this statement, monseigneur," said the Comte de Horn. "De Mille is a captain in the same regiment of cavalry as myself, but I was not aware of the previous part of his history. Till this moment I supposed he was a son of old Laurent de Mille, whose property he inherited."

It was easy to perceive that this statement had produced the intended effect upon the Regent, and that the offender's pardon was secured.

"I did wrong in venturing to approach your highness without permission," said Captain de Mille. "But I relied upon your good nature, of which I have known so many proofs, to excuse me."

"The explanation you have given me is far more satisfactory than I anticipated," said the Regent. "I am glad to hear you have distinguished yourself, Captain de Mille, as I presume I must now call you. I am willing to overlook the irregularity of your present proceeding, and to attribute it to creditable motives. The prohibition against your entrance into the Palais Royal shall be removed, and henceforth you are at liberty to present yourself at my levees."

De Mille bowed profoundly, and retired with the Comte de Horn.

When they were gone, the Comte de Nocé approached the Regent, and said to him in a low tone, "Monseigneur, you are aware that I am a physiognomist. Eh bien! I have attentively studied the Comte de Horn's countenance during his interview with your highness. It is a bad face—a very bad face. I am convinced he is capable of any crime. Nay, more, I believe he will come to a violent end."

"Bah!" exclaimed the Regent, incredulously. "If you had said this of Captain de Mille, I might believe it —but De Horn!—no!"

"It is so writtten in his face, monseigneur," rejoined Nocé. "And unless I am greatly mistaken, De Mille will share his fate."

V.

THE CAFÉ PROCOPE.

THE first café was opened in Paris by an Armenian named Pascal, about forty years before the date of our story, and so quickly did these establishments increase, being greatly to the taste of the Parisians, that at the time of which we write there were more than three hundred in existence, one of the best being the Café Procope, now known as the Café Zoppi, situated in the Rue Saint-Germain-des-Prés, exactly opposite the old Comédie.

Besides the best coffee in Paris, a great deal of amusement could be had at the Café Procope, play being permitted in a back salon; while in the private cabinets delicious suppers were served, and partaken of by charming actresses from the Comédie, and fascinating filles de l'Opéra. Thus, for various reasons, the Café Procope ranked high amongst pleasant places of resort, and was much frequented by poets, actors, painters, men of business, men of learning, men of science, and men of pleasure.

On quitting the Palais Royal, the Comte de Horn and Captain de Mille drove to the café in question, where they expected to meet a friend, the Chevalier d'Etampes, and on entering the principal salon, a spacious apartment, richly gilded, and embellished with mirrors, they discovered the object of their search seated at a table, taking coffee with another personage, with whom they were unacquainted, but whose appearance and manner did not prepossess them in his favour.

The Chevalier d'Etampes was a young man of some two or three-and-twenty, tolerably good looking, and well dressed, but the individual with him was middle-aged, short and stout, the most noticeable part of his coarse physiognomy being an excessively flat nose; and

though his habiliments were rich, he had a decidedly bourgeois look and manner. De Horn and De Mille wondered at their friend's familiarity with a person of this description, but their surprise ceased when he was introduced to them by D'Etampes as M. Nicomède Cossard, director of the Compagnie d'Occident. Then they understood why so much attention was paid him, and became, in their turn, anxious to secure his good graces.

Ever since Cossard had become a director of the great company, he had risen immensely in his own opinion, and gave himself an air of great importance. To judge by his talk, he was Law's right hand. Nothing was done by the director-general without consulting him. Thus, when the Comte de Horn spoke of Law's intention of buying up the shares of the Compagnie, with forty per cent. premium, he at once exclaimed,

"That was my idea. I suggested it to the director-general, who at once, perceiving it to be a masterstroke of policy, adopted it. We shall crush the Frères Paris. But this is only the commencement of the System. I have other plans here," he added, tapping his forehead, "which, when developed and brought into operation, will astonish you."

"Perhaps you will be so obliging as to give me a hint now and then, M. le Directeur," said the Comte de Horn. "I have come to Paris in the hope of making a little money."

"M. Cossard has already given me some valuable advice by which I hope to profit," observed the Chevalier d'Etampes."

"I trust M. Cossard will be equally complaisant to me," remarked De Mille. "A few words from him may enable me to make a fortune."

"It will afford me great pleasure to serve you, messieurs," replied Cossard. "But if I do give you a hint. you must act upon it without asking for an explanation. Permit me to inquire if you have any shares in the Occident?"

"I have twenty, which I mean to sell to-morrow, and

secure the premium promised by M. Law," replied the Comte de Horn.

"You will do wrong," said Cossard, significantly. "Keep them. Buy more if you can."

"But the premium?" cried the count.

"Don't think about it," said Cossard. "If you are determined to sell, I will buy the shares from you at this moment at par; but you will do wisely to keep them, and I give the same advice to you, messieurs," he added to the two others.

"I have none to sell," laughed De Mille.

"Nor, I," added D'Etampes.

"Then buy—buy!" cried Cossard. "I think I can obtain you a few from M. Laborde. But you will have to pay a hundred per cent. for them. Still, they are worth it. I wouldn't sell at any price."

"Pray, who is M. Laborde?" inquired De Mille.

"Parbleu! a brother-director," cried Cossard; "a very clever man, and greatly, and I may say deservedly, in Mr. Law's confidence. M. Laborde and myself are the director-general's chief advisers."

"Is Laborde rich?" asked De Mille.

"He is fast becoming so," replied Cossard. "In a few months he will be a millionnaire. Poor Laborde! he has known strange changes of fortune. A few years ago he was a great capitalist, but was well-nigh ruined by his scapegrace son, whose debts he paid, and then completely beggared by the Chamber of Justice. Luckily, when things were at the worst, he found a friend in M. Law, who placed him in the Bank, and from that day to this he has prospered."

"His son will help him to spend his money," remarked D'Etampes.

"No he won't, for he has got rid of the rascal," replied Cossard. "Raoul Laborde daren't show his face in Paris. But I ought to tell you, messieurs, that I am about to be married to Laborde's daughter."

"Diable!" cried De Mille. "Is it possible Colombe can have consented to marry you?"

"Quite possible, and, moreover, it is the fact," replied Cossard, somewhat offended. "Owing to the illness of Mademoiselle Laborde the marriage has been delayed, but it will shortly take place. Permit me to observe, Captain de Mille, that it is not agreeable to me to have my intended bride spoken of otherwise than as Mademoiselle Laborde, and I do not imagine there can be any intimacy to warrant the liberty you have taken. Are you acquainted with Mademoiselle Laborde and her father?"

"I knew them formerly," replied De Mille. "In fact, I am a friend of Raoul Laborde—his intimate friend."

"That will scarcely be a recommendation either to father or daughter," observed Cossard.

"Has Colombe—I mean Mademoiselle Laborde—ever spoken to you of Raoul?" inquired De Mille.

"She never mentions his name," said Cossard. "But I know what her sentiments are from her father. She does not desire to behold her brother again. But here comes M. Laborde. If you desire to hear his opinion of Raoul, you can easily elicit it."

"My father!" mentally ejaculated De Mille. "Devil take him! What ill wind blows him here at this moment?"

The situation was trying; and would have embarrassed any one not possessed of strong nerves, but De Mille's assurance did not desert him. As the elder Laborde approached the table at which Cossard was seated, the latter arose, and while they were exchanging a few words, evidently upon business, the old man's gaze alighted upon De Mille, who was sipping his coffee and chatting with the others with an air of the utmost unconcern.

Suddenly pausing in his conversation, Laborde exclaimed, in an altered tone,

"Do my eyes deceive me?—can it be?"

"Yes, yes, my good friend, it is the person you imagine," replied Cossard. "It is Captain de Mille."

"De Mille!" ejaculated Laborde. "Is that the name he goes by?"

"I believe so," returned Cossard, "but I have no acquaintance with him. He has only just come in with the Comte de Horn, and was introduced to me by the Chevalier d'Etampes. If I understood aright, he is an officer of cavalry in the Austrian service."

At this moment De Mille, who, though apparently paying no attention, had been watching them through the corner of his eye, arose, and, with great nonchalance, said,

"I dare say you don't recollect me, M. Laborde?"

"I do not desire to do so," replied the old man, endeavouring to control his emotion. "A word with you, Captain de Mille," he added, stepping aside.

"With pleasure, sir," replied the other, following him to a corner of the room, where they were out of hearing. "Pray be seated, sir," he added, offering him a chair; "you will be more at your ease, and we shall attract less attention during our conference. Allow me to offer you a cup of coffee. Garçon, a cup of coffee for monsieur."

In an instant the fragrant beverage was served, but Laborde did not taste it.

"You have done well to change the name you have dishonoured," he said. "Is it true you are in the Austrian service?"

"Perfectly true. If you doubt it, ask my brother-officer, the Comte de Horn. I have excellent interest, and am sure to rise. I ought to have your congratulations, sir."

"You shall receive them when you have the command of your regiment," replied Laborde. "Meantime, I will own you have done better than I expected. But it is highly imprudent in you to return to Paris, without permission from the lieutenant-general of police. You are certain to be recognised, and arrested."

"Make yourself easy on that score, sir," replied De Mille. "I am in no danger. I have made my peace with the Regent, and have his highness's safeguard. More than that, I have once more the entrée of the Palais Royal. I am extremely happy to learn, sir, from your friend M.

Nicomède Cossard, that you are in such flourishing circumstances, and I trust you won't forget you have a son."

"I have no son," replied Laborde, sternly. "I cast him from me for ever when I stood in the pillory in the Place des Halles, to which he sent me. Conduct infamous and unnatural as his can never be forgiven. If I meet him, it must be as a stranger."

"Perhaps you may change your mind, sir?"

"Never!" cried Laborde, emphatically. "I repeat, I have no son."

"Pray be calm, sir. I dare say your discarded son will treat your conduct towards him very philosophically, and will be content, since such is your desire, to meet you as a stranger. Addressing you, therefore, as Captain de Mille, may I ask you, as an influential director of the Compagnie d'Occident, to assist me in my speculations?"

"As Captain de Mille, you can have no possible claim on me," replied Laborde, coldly, "and I must decline, therefore, to assist you. In a word, we must not meet again."

"Pardon me, sir," rejoined De Mille. "It is not my intention to part with you thus. We must come to an understanding. If friendly, so much the better; if the contrary, it cannot be helped. If you reject me as Captain de Mille, I shall be compelled to resume my former appellation, and proclaim myself your son. I fancy you won't like that."

"No, that must not be," thought Laborde, whose trouble did not escape the vigilant eye of his son; "at least, not till after Colombe's marriage. You are right in saying that your resumption of your name would be disagreeable to me," he added, aloud. "It would also be highly prejudicial to yourself."

"Hum! I am not so certain of that," returned the other.

"Your reappearance at this juncture would be a source of great distress to your sister, and might interfere with her marriage with M. Cossard," observed Laborde.

"Aha! I see," thought De Mille. "He wants to keep me quiet, and will naturally make it worth my while to be so. I should like to have a few shares in the Company, sir," he added, aloud. "Half a dozen will content me."

"I dare say they would," replied Laborde, dryly. "But you won't get them from me."

"M. Cossard told me just now that you have a few left."

"But they are promised."

"Promised or not, I must have half a dozen—as the price of my assent to your proposal."

"Well, you shall have them—but only on the express condition that you trouble me no further."

"Agreed!" cried De Mille. "If you do not wish me to call at the Hôtel de Nevers, send them to the Hôtel de Flandres, in the Rue Dauphine, where I lodge with the Comte de Horn and the Chevalier d'Etampes. A propos of M. Cossard, it strikes me he is not exactly the husband for Colombe."

"Colombe is perfectly satisfied," remarked Laborde.

"Oh! I have nothing to say against him," returned De Mille. "I suppose he is very rich, and that is the main point. But I didn't think Colombe would consent to marry him. I fancied her affections might be engaged by that handsome young Englishman, Evelyn Harcourt."

"She had some liking for that young man at one time, but the affair was at an end long before M. Cossard appeared on the scene."

"That was lucky, otherwise Cossard's chance might have been slight. But I am glad things have so turned out. I detest this M. Harcourt. Is he still in Paris?"

"He is," replied Laborde.

"Then I may have the gratification I have long promised myself of cutting his throat," replied De Mille.

"I shouldn't be sorry if you did," observed Laborde, "for Cossard dislikes him, and Colombe, I fear, still cherishes a secret regard for him."

"Something may be made of this," thought De Mille. "Well, sir," he added, "I will try to rid you of this

troublesome gallant, but if I do, I shall expect some acknowledgment of the service."

"You will have little difficulty in meeting him," said Laborde, without noticing the latter part of his son's remark. "He comes daily to this café, and about this hour. I have rarely been here without meeting him."

VI.

CAPTAIN LAMOTHE CADILLAC

SEVERAL persons at this moment entered the café. Amongst them was an old man of very striking appearance. He was clad in an antiquated military costume, which might have been in fashion thirty years ago, but was now quite out of date. His features were bronzed, strongly marked, and seamed with scars, his frame gaunt, and his neck long and scraggy. He talked loudly, as if desirous of attracting attention to what he said.

"Voilà! a soldier of Tallard's day," exclaimed De Mille. "Who is he?"

"A crack-brained Mississippi captain, named Lamothe Cadillac," replied Laborde. "He has just returned from Louisiana."

"Ah! indeed," cried De Mille. "I should like to hear what he has to say concerning the colony."

"Then you had better take advantage of the present opportunity, for I don't think you are likely to meet him again," said Laborde. "He is employed by the Frères Paris to depreciate the colony, and has come hither for that purpose, but I fancy this will be the last time he will hold forth in public."

With this he arose, and followed by De Mille, moved towards that part of the room where Cadillac and his friends were seated.

They had selected a table adjoining that occupied by Cossard and the young men with him. Unaware of his danger, the incautious veteran was narrating his experiences of the Mississippi, and denouncing all Law's brilliant representations of the colony as fables.

"Be cautious, captain," said a person near him. "There is a director of the Compagnie d'Occident at the next table."

"So much the better," replied Captain Lamothe Cadillac, in a loud voice, and levelling his discourse at Cossard. "I repeat, that all the marvels you hear about Louisiana are invented by M. Law to entrap shareholders."

"What is that you are saying about M. Law, sir?" cried Cossard, rising from his seat. "I beg you to understand that I am M. Law's friend, and a director of the Compagnie d'Occident."

"Then, M. le Directeur, it is desirable you should hear the truth," rejoined the veteran. "I, Captain Lamothe Cadillac, have been in Louisiana for the last seventeen years, and I ought to know something of the country, and I affirm that the pompous announcements of M. Law are simple fabrications, designed to mislead the public. I was employed by Antoine Crozat in that brave man's attempt to colonise the country, and I know to my cost that the enterprise signally failed. Since then, notwithstanding all the statements to the contrary, very little has been done. One day we hear of the departure from Brest or Havre of a fleet laden with merchandise and crowded with colonists. Next day we are told of the arrival of another fleet, bringing millions from the Mississippi. Lies both."

"You are mistaken, captain—you are mistaken," cried Cossard.

"No, M. le Directeur, I am not mistaken," rejoined Cadillac. "The public is duped by these devices. A few weeks ago it was stated—on M. Law's authority—that a silk manufactory had been established, at which twelve thousand Natchez women were employed. A

very likely story!" he added, winking at those near him, all of whom laughed loudly. "A very likely story! I have been in the country, and I never saw three hundred Natchez women got together at any time."

"What say you, captain, to the bullion and ingots of gold and silver discovered in the Mississippi, which have been sent to the Mint to be assayed?" cried Cossard.

"What do I say?" rejoined Cadillac, contemptuously. "I deny it. Gold and silver ingots may have been sent to the Mint, but they didn't come from the Mississippi. There are no precious metals there."

"Perhaps you will say there are no precious stones —no diamonds or rubies, jacinths or agates?" retorted Cossard. "Perhaps you will venture to deny that there is a great rock of emerald in the Arkansas, and that Captain Laharpe, with a detachment of twenty men, has been sent to take possession of it?"

"Pure rodomontade," replied Cadillac. "I should like to see such a rock; but it exists only in M. Law's imagination. Pay attention, messieurs, and you shall hear the exact truth from me. To begin with, there are no lovely native women ready to rush into the arms of the colonists on their arrival. All the women, young and old, are frightful—savages in every sense. The greater part of the vast region of the Mississippi is a scarcely habitable desert, swampy and desolated by fever, and many years must elapse before it can be colonised and rendered productive. Such, I pledge my word as a man of honour, is the actual condition of the Mississippi country, of which so many wonders, so many falsehoods, are narrated. You see, messieurs," he added, looking round, "what admirable security you have for the money you have invested in the Compagnie d'Occident. Compare my truthful picture with that presented to you by M. Law."

"Your charges are libellous, captain," cried Cossard.

"I can substantiate them," replied the veteran. "I have heard, since I came back, that a splendid city, called

New Orléans, after his highness the Regent, has been built; but as yet the foundations only have been laid by M. Delatour, the engineer."

"Well, the city *will* be built," cried Cossard; "and a splendid city New Orléans will be when finished—one of the finest cities in the world. I wonder, while denying all the natural resources of the Louisiana, that you do not aver that the Mississippi is no larger than the Seine."

"The great Father of Waters would give me the lie if I did!" cried Cadillac. "There is no river like the Mississippi."

"I'm surprised you make the admission," said Cossard.

At this juncture, Laborde made a sign to Cossard, and quitted the café.

Nothing more passed for a few moments, when Cadillac, having swallowed his coffee, returned to the charge. Cossard, however, interrupted him, and said:

"I warn you not to give too much licence to your tongue, sir."

"Bah! I am not to be intimidated," said the veteran. "I shall speak the truth, regardless of consequences. It is my duty to set the public right, and show them how they have been gulled."

At this moment, an exempt of police entered the café, and marching straight to the table at which the veteran was seated, touched him on the shoulder, saying,

"You are Captain Lamothe Cadillac, I believe?"

"At your service, sir."

The exempt whispered a word in the veteran's ear.

"Arrested!" exclaimed Cadillac, starting to his feet.

Great consternation was caused among Cadillac's friends at this unexpected event; but no interference in the veteran's behalf was attempted. The party, however, at the adjoining table appeared amused by the incident.

"Adieu, captain!" cried Cossard, in a jeering tone. "I hope you will find a comfortable cell in the Bastille. You can there rail away at your leisure."

"I would rather be taken to the Bastille than be sent

back to the Mississippi," retorted Cadillac. "Adieu, messieurs!" he added, looking round at his friends. "You see how they treat an old soldier, who has bled for his country, and whose only offence is speaking the truth."

"Adieu, mon brave! — au revoir, capitaine!" they cried, embracing him, and grasping his hand.

"Follow me, captain," said the exempt, anxious to put an end to the scene.

"One moment, sir, I beg of you," implored the veteran. "I have a parting word to say to my friends."

"I cannot allow it, captain," said the officer, peremptorily; "you have already trespassed too much on my patience. Allons!"

And he turned to depart, but found himself checked by Harcourt, who, having entered the café at the moment the veteran's arrest took place, had drawn near to ascertain what was taking place.

The exempt motioned him to stand out of the way, but Evelyn maintained his ground.

"You will not refuse the old man's request?" he said to the officer. "Allow him to speak."

"What means this interference, sir?" cried the exempt, sternly. "Do you dare to molest me in the discharge of my duty? Stand aside, at your peril!"

Just then, however, his attention was drawn to Cadillac, who, taking advantage of the interruption, had leaped upon a chair, in order to address the assemblage. The veteran's friends quickly gathered round him, so that the exempt could not get near to dislodge him.

"This is all your doing, sir," cried the officer of police to Evelyn. "If any disturbance occurs, you will be responsible for it."

"Don't be uneasy, sir, no disturbance will occur," cried Cadillac, from his exalted position. "As soon as I have said a word to the company, I will attend you quietly. Hear me, messieurs," he added, raising his voice, "I am to be shut up in the Bastille, because it is inconvenient to M. Law that the true condition of the colony of the Mississippi should be known to the public. Not able to

make me hold my tongue, M. Law has had recourse to this expedient. But I appeal to you whether imprisonment is a fitting recompense for an old soldier, who has served his country faithfully? Look here," he added, baring his breast, "here are the marks of the wounds I received at Fleury, when we defeated the Dutch. This scar was given me at Mons—this at the siege of Namur —this at Huy. I was complimented for my bravery by Marshals Luxembourg and Boufflers; but that was the sole reward I obtained. I have been seventeen years in the Mississippi, and have spent more than half the time with the Red Indians, accompanying them on their hunting expeditions, and during their wars with hostile tribes, so that I am well acquainted with the whole region; and I confidently affirm that years, many years, must elapse ere it can be inhabited by any other than its present savage denizens. There are no precious metals to be found there, no precious stones; but there are plenty of alligators in the rivers, plenty of wild beasts in the forests, plenty of fevers to be got in the marshes. Had I not possessed a frame of iron I should have perished long ago. It is because I am convinced that the colony will not prosper in our time, though it may do so hereafter, that I have lifted up the voice of warning. Antoine Crozat's enterprise failed—so will Jean Law's. The scheme will prove ruinous to all who have embarked in it. Unable to controvert my statements, or to bribe me to silence, the director-general of the Compagnie d'Occident sends me to the Bastille. He may continue to dupe the shareholders. He may persuade them that all the riches of Mexico and Peru are to be found in the Mississippi, but the truth will at last come out, and then —though too late!—my warning will be recollected!"

Loud murmurs arose from the group around him, and maledictions were uttered against Law.

"Be not unjust, messieurs," said Evelyn. "I am sure M. Law can never have counselled this severe measure."

"The measure is necessary, sir," cried Cossard. "It is by M. Law's order that Cadillac is arrested."

"I am unwilling to believe it, even on your authority, sir," rejoined Evelyn.

"By whom was the lettre de cachet for Captain Lamothe Cadillac's arrest delivered to you, sir?" said Cossard to the exempt.

"By M. Laborde, who had it from M. Law," replied the officer.

"Are you satisfied now, sir?" said Cossard to Evelyn.

The young man made no reply, but his countenance showed he was much grieved.

"I have been detained here long enough," said the exempt. "Are you coming, Cadillac? Or must I call in the guard, and take you hence by force?"

"A word more, and I have done," replied the veteran. "I am grateful for the sympathy manifested in my behalf by that young gentleman," he added, looking towards Evelyn, "and I hope his generosity may not do him a mischief. Au revoir, mes amis! If I am only to be kept in the Bastille till this Mississippi bubble bursts, I shall be speedily liberated."

With this he descended, and his friends separating to let him pass, he followed the exempt out of the café, marching with head erect, and with firm footstep.

At the door was a public coach, and near it were drawn up a dozen archers of the guard. The prisoner having been placed in this vehicle by the exempt, who seated himself beside him, one of the archers mounted the box, and bade the coachman drive to the Bastille.

VII.

HOW CAPTAIN DE MILLE AND M. NICOMÈDE COSSARD CAME TO AN UNDERSTANDING.

No one who witnessed the occurrence just related was more painfully affected by it than Evelyn Harcourt. After watching the brave old soldier march out to prison, he threw himself into a chair, and for a short time was lost in painful thought. He was roused by loud laughter, which sounded discordantly in his ears, and looking in the direction whence it proceeded, his eye fell upon Cossard.

As may be imagined, the wealthy director, who had robbed him of her he loved best, was an object of extraordinary aversion to Evelyn, and whenever they met the young man had to put strong constraint upon himself to avoid insulting his rival. On his part, Cossard detested Evelyn quite as much as Evelyn detested him, but he was far too careful of his personal safety to hazard a quarrel. He abominated duelling, and so pacific was his disposition that it may be questioned whether a coup de bâton or even a coup de pied would have caused him to fight.

Of course, Cossard was quite aware that an attachment had subsisted between his promised bride and Evelyn, and he more than suspected that she still cherished a regard for her former lover, but he did not give himself much anxiety on this score, as he had no fear of losing her. Colombe avoided him as much as possible, and never would be alone with him, and her deportment towards him was such that it was impossible, notwithstanding his self-esteem, that he could flatter himself that she loved him. But this did not trouble him more than her suspected attachment to Evelyn.

It was not Cossard's fault, and certainly not Laborde's, that the marriage had not taken place long ago. But

owing to one circumstance or other it had been constantly delayed, and even now no day was fixed for the ceremony. Colombe had always a fresh excuse for its postponement, and though her father's patience was nearly worn out by her foolish whims, as he termed them, he was obliged to yield. Had he not been greatly engrossed at the time by the affairs of the Compagnie d'Occident, he might not have been so good natured. Meantime, Cossard was assiduous in his attentions, and strove to win the favour of his intended bride by magnificent presents. He was continually sending her diamond rings, necklaces, and bracelets, with other costly ornaments, none of which, even at her father's instance, could she be induced to wear. Indeed, it was with great reluctance that she accepted them. These presents, however, gave great delight to little Catherine Law, who was never tired of examining them, and she declared that Colombe's diamonds were much handsomer than her mamma's. We must not omit to mention that, although Colombe had found it absolutely impossible to conquer her attachment to Evelyn, she had never exchanged a word with him in private, nor had any letters passed between them. They met occasionally in society, but that was all.

Such was the actual state of affairs between the rivals when they met in the Café Procope on the day in question.

While glancing at Cossard, Evelyn for the first time noticed De Mille, and at once recognised him, but almost doubting the evidence of his senses, he got up and drew a little nearer to the table to make sure he was not mistaken.

"Is that a friend of yours, mon cher?" said the Comte de Horn to De Mille. "He stares very hard at you."

Surveying Evelyn impertinently from head to foot, De Mille replied,

"No, I have not the honour of his acquaintance."

"He is an Englishman, named Harcourt," whispered Cossard. "Don't provoke him. He is apt to be quarrelsome."

"Ah, is he so?" cried De Mille. "Then he is fortu-

nate in meeting with one who is as ready to quarrel as himself. Permit me to remark, sir," he added to Evelyn, "that I find your manner of looking at me offensive—excessively offensive—and I must beg you to desist, and relieve us from your presence."

"Pray do not let there be any misunderstanding between you, messieurs," interposed Cossard. "Clearly there is some mistake, which I may be able to rectify. Possibly you may not be aware, M. Harcourt, of the rank and position of these gentlemen, and therefore I will take leave to mention that this is the Comte de Horn, this the Chevalier d'Etampes, and this gentleman, whom you have been looking at, is Captain De Mille."

"We have all just arrived from Brussels," observed the Comte de Horn. "And I scarcely think M. Harcourt can have seen any of us before."

"It is very strange," thought Evelyn, staggered. "The face, the figure, the voice, the manner are all the same as Raoul Laborde's. And yet if it were he, he would not be here with Cossard. I am now sensible of my error," he added, aloud; "but I took Captain De Mille for another person whom he strongly resembles."

"Ha! ha! there are a great many curious resemblances," laughed Cossard. "I have frequently been mistaken for somebody else, myself. Captain De Mille, I am quite sure, will be satisfied with the explanation. Pray sit down, M. Harcourt."

Evelyn, however, declined, and bowing somewhat haughtily to the young men, who returned his salutation in the same stately way, he moved off, and presently left the café.

"Why the devil did you interfere, M. Cossard?" observed De Mille, as soon as Evelyn was gone. "That cursed puppy ought to have had his ears cropped for his impertinence."

"If you are bent upon fighting him, you will easily find an opportunity of doing so," returned the other. "But I do not desire to be mixed up in a duel."

"Pardieu! I shan't be easy till I have settled accounts with him," said De Mille.

"I should be sorry to hinder you," rejoined Cossard. "Between ourselves, this young Englishman is personally disagreeable to me. I'll tell you why, on some other occasion."

"I'm already in the secret," said De Mille. "M. Laborde gave me a hint just now. Step this way, sir," he added, taking Cossard aside. "Unless that young man is removed, Mademoiselle Laborde will never be yours. He is a more serious obstacle in your path than you imagine."

"There may be some truth in what you say," rejoined Cossard, carelessly. "I never viewed the matter in that light. Still, I must own that circumstances seem to bear you out."

"I have it from M. Laborde, who *must* know," remarked De Mille. "This young Harcourt is the great bar to your union with Mademoiselle Laborde."

"Deuce take him! I wish he were back in England," cried Cossard.

"He may go there, and take your intended bride with him," said De Mille.

"Sacrebleu! that mustn't be."

"Of course not. You won't fight him, I suppose."

"My position won't allow me. Besides, I have a vow against duelling."

"Then I am your man. I'll fight him for you. And, what is more, I'll kill him," said De Mille.

"Stay!" exclaimed Cossard. "I have a better plan than that. We'll ruin him. I'll show you how to do it, and make your own fortune at the same time."

"A merveille!" exclaimed De Mille. "That plan is infinitely preferable to the other. Count upon me. There's my hand."

VIII.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN M. LABORDE AND LADY CATHERINE LAW.

COLOMBE and little Kate were alone together in a room opening upon the charming garden at the back of the Hôtel Law, when M. Laborde came in, carrying a red velvet écrin, which instantly attracted the attention of the younger lady.

"Bonjour, M. Laborde!" she cried, saluting him. "I see you have brought Colombe something pretty from M. Cossard."

"How do you know that, mademoiselle?" he rejoined. "Perhaps I have brought a present for you."

"Oh no! I'm sure you have not; but do let me look at it. Oh! how very beautiful!" she exclaimed, as he opened the casket, and displayed its contents to her admiring gaze. "Do look here, Colombe! Here is the loveliest pearl necklace you ever beheld. Let me show it to her," she added, snatching the box from Laborde, and taking it to Colombe. "Isn't it exquisite? Aren't you very much obliged to your dear Nicomède? And won't you do him the favour to wear it?" she added, roguishly.

"Put it down, darling, please," remarked Colombe, without bestowing a look at the necklace, which really deserved the praise lavished on it by little Kate.

"Have you brought anything else, M. Laborde?" inquired Kate, as she complied with the request.

"What more would you have?" he returned. "A necklace like that, which cost two thousand livres, is enough for one day. But if Colombe has a fancy for any other ornament, M. Cossard will be enchanted to send it her."

"What a delightful man he is!" exclaimed Kate. "But, unluckily, all his presents are thrown away upon Colombe, for she won't look at any of them. Do just

try on this necklace?" she added, in a coaxing tone. "I'm sure it will become you so much."

"Pray don't ask me, child. I won't touch it. If you think the necklace pretty, you are welcome to it."

"No, no, you mustn't part with it!—must she, M. Laborde?"

"What folly is this, Colombe?" cried Laborde. "M. Cossard will naturally be offended if he hears what little store you set upon his gifts. His great desire is to please you."

"Then let him cease to make me presents," rejoined Colombe. "Instead of gratifying me, they cause me annoyance."

"Cause you annoyance, Colombe!" cried Kate. "Oh! that is impossible. Mamma says M. Cossard has most exquisite taste in jewels. She admires everything he has sent you, diamonds, lace, and dresses. She was talking to papa only yesterday about your magnificent veil, and asking him to buy her one like it."

"I wish I might give her mine," said Colombe. "I shall never wear it."

"Oh yes!" cried Kate. "You will wear it on your wedding-day."

"You are right, my dear," observed Laborde. "It is meant for that happy occasion."

"Happy occasion!" mentally ejaculated Colombe "To me it will be the most wretched day of my life. I cannot think of it without horror."

"You don't like to talk of your marriage, I know, Colombe, so I won't teaze you any more about it," said Kate. "I only wish, for your sake, that M. Cossard were half as nice as his presents. I'll come back in a moment."

And she quitted the room.

"Come and sit down beside me, Colombe," said her father, as soon as they were alone. "I must chide you for your silly conduct. You make it evident to all, even to that child, that you dislike your intended husband. As you cannot retract the promise you have given him, such a display of repugnance is exceedingly indiscreet."

"I cannot help it, papa. I have promised to marry M. Cossard, and I will marry him. But I can't pretend to like him. Pray don't let him send me any more presents."

"Nonsense, child, I can't prevent him. You are the first woman I ever heard of who made such an absurd request. Cossard is generous as a prince, and I wouldn't for the world hurt him by hinting that his presents are not acceptable. But a truce to this. I have disagreeable news for you. Whom do you think I met yesterday at the Café Procope?"

"Not Raoul, I hope?" she cried.

"You have guessed right—'twas he. To my infinite surprise and annoyance I found him seated with Cossard, who, however, is ignorant of his real name, and I hope will remain so. Raoul now calls himself Captain de Mille, and, if he is to be believed, is an officer of cavalry in the Austrian service. The Regent, it appears, has removed the prohibition against his return to Paris, and given him a safeguard against arrest by the police. I wish I could add that he is improved in character as in position. He looks well enough, is richly dressed, and has for companions two young men of rank, the Comte de Horn and the Chevalier d'Etampes—but, like Raoul himself, they have both a dissolute air."

"Had you any private conversation with Raoul, papa?" asked Colombe.

"Not much, but enough to convince me he is unchanged. During the brief interview I had with him, his sole object was to extort money from me, and were I weak enough to yield, as I once did, his demands would increase. What sin have I committed," he added, with a groan, "that I should be cursed with such a son? He has been the bane of my life, and now that I have raised myself from the miserable condition in which he plunged me by his infamous conduct, he comes to destroy my peace!"

And he turned away, and buried his face in his hands.

After a pause he added, in a voice of anguish, "The unnatural wretch will bring shame and sorrow upon me. He has already broken his mother's heart, and he will break mine."

"Be comforted, father, and think no more of him. is well for us that he has changed his name."

"Better if he had changed his nature," cried Laborde, "but the Ethiop might as well seek to alter his hue as Raoul to become honest. He has fastened himself upon Cossard, and, like a blood-sucker, will not drop off till the veins of his victim are emptied."

"If you really believe this, father, it is your duty to warn M. Cossard," said Colombe. "If you do not like the task, leave it to me."

"No, no—not yet," cried Laborde, hastily. "When you are married you can tell all to your husband."

"But M. Cossard ought to know it now," said Colombe.

"I peremptorily forbid you to speak to him on the subject," cried her father. "Colombe, there must be no further delay in your marriage. Raoul's reappearance renders this necessary. When you are settled, I shall feel easy."

Before Colombe could return an answer, a lacquey in a rich livery entered, and told Laborde that Lady Catherine Law would be glad to speak with him. On this, Laborde arose, and bidding his daughter think over what he had said to her, he followed the lacquey to a large and superbly-furnished salon, in which he found Lady Catherine alone.

Her ladyship, as we have already mentioned, still retained her good looks, and full effect was given to her stately and imposing figure by the magnificent attire in which she was arrayed. She did not rise on Laborde's entrance, but received him graciously, yet with a certain distance and haughtiness.

"I have sent for you, M. Laborde," she observed, "because I have a few words to say in reference to Colombe. You know how fondly attached I am to her.

It is not saying too much to assert that I love her as well as my own daughter."

"Your ladyship need not give me that assurance," said Laborde, who did not like this commencement, and suspected what was coming. "You have fully proved it."

"I am about to prove it more strongly now," rejoined Lady Catherine. "The marriage agreed upon between Colombe and M. Cossard offers some advantages, but I begin to think it ought not to take place."

"Ah! now it comes," thought Laborde. "Even if I concurred with your ladyship in opinion—and I am obliged to differ from you—the affair has proceeded too far to be broken off," he added, aloud. "I cannot, in honour, retreat."

"I see the difficulty, but, where Colombe's happiness is at stake, no other consideration ought to have weight. She has made no complaint to me, but I am sure she suffers greatly, and I am equally sure her recent illness is attributable to this cause. You cannot desire to force her inclinations, and make her miserable."

"Certainly not, miladi," replied Laborde. "I am satisfied I am promoting her happiness by giving her to a worthy man, and I am supported in my opinion by M. Law, who highly approves the match, and has more than once told me that I may esteem myself singularly fortunate in marrying my daughter so well."

"I am quite aware that my husband approves the match," returned Lady Catherine, "and so should I, if I thought Colombe would be happy—but I do not. You must give her another month's respite, M. Laborde."

"I don't see how I can do so, miladi. M. Cossard is growing impatient. Indeed, for many reasons, I am anxious to hasten on the marriage rather than delay it. I have just told Colombe so."

"M. Laborde," said Lady Catherine, "the marriage must be postponed for a month."

"Impossible, miladi."

"But I say it must," she rejoined, in a tone that did

not admit of dispute. "During that time I will exert all the influence I possess over Colombe to reconcile her to the match."

"I am under too many obligations to your ladyship to refuse any request you may make of me," replied Laborde, "but I fear Colombe will be just as reluctant to fulfil her engagement a month hence as she is now."

"I think I can promise that she will be prepared to obey you," rejoined Lady Catherine. "But you must be aware that her heart has been given to another."

"I hoped she had long since conquered her silly passion for Evelyn Harcourt," said Laborde.

"She has striven hard to do so, but unsuccessfully," replied Lady Catherine. "Tell me, M. Laborde, what is your objection to that young man?"

"I have no particular objection to him, miladi, except that he is poor."

"But you are rich enough to make your daughter happy by giving her to the only person she can love?"

"My word is pledged to M. Cossard, and is irrevocable. But even if this engagement did not subsist, I would not give my daughter to Evelyn Harcourt. I accede to your ladyship's request to postpone the marriage for a month, but, at the expiration of that time, it must take place, and I rely upon your kind promise to prepare Colombe for it."

With this he bowed, and quitted the room.

"Poor Colombe!" sighed Lady Catherine, as she was left alone. "She must not be thus sacrificed. M. Law supports this odious Cossard, and desires me not to interfere, but in a case like this I shall not heed the injunction. If I can hinder it, the marriage shall not take place."

IX.

HOW EVELYN BECAME A SPECULATOR.

COLOMBE was alone in a large and superbly-furnished salon in the Hôtel Law, when, to her infinite surprise, Evelyn Harcourt was announced.

"Pardon me, mademoiselle," he said, as soon as the lacquey retired, "I am permitted by Lady Catherine Law thus to present myself. I am about to return to England, and have come to take leave of you—perhaps for ever!" he added, with irrepressible emotion.

"Are you returning to England?" said Colombe, scarcely able to control the agitation caused by this unlooked-for announcement. "I thought you preferred Paris to London. You told me so, I remember."

"At that time I did prefer it," he replied; "and if those days could be revived, I should prefer it still. But they are gone, and all that made this city so bright and pleasant to me is fled. I have relinquished my post as attaché to Lord Stair, and, though he is unwilling to accept my resignation, I shall go. With change of scene I may possibly regain the happiness I have lost."

"Are you unhappy, then?" said Colombe.

"Can you ask it?" he replied, bitterly. "Can you suppose that under the circumstances in which I am placed I can be otherwise than wretched—most wretched? Do you imagine I can forget the past? But what is my misery to you? You heed it not. You have ceased to think of me."

"It is cruel in you to say so, Evelyn," she rejoined. "You well know I can never cease to take the deepest interest in you."

"Excuse me, mademoiselle. I am unable to credit what you say. If you really cared for me, you could not have acted as you have done. But it is neither to reproach you, nor to move your compassion by refer-

ring to my own sufferings, that I am come here now. I simply wished to bid you farewell before my departure. May you be happy, Colombe!"

"Oh! do not distress me thus!" she cried, entirely losing her self-control, "or you will break my heart. Why should you leave Paris?"

"Because I could not bear to see you wedded to another. I must fly before the ceremony takes place."

"But it may never take place," she remarked.

"What do I hear?" he exclaimed. "Is there a chance that this hateful marriage may be broken off? I thought it inevitable. Are you not plighted to this man? Do not awaken hopes that may never be realised. By dooming me to fresh disappointment you will render my anguish insupportable. Oh! Colombe, are you not irrevocably bound to Cossard?"

"I am not," she replied, firmly. "And I never will marry him."

Transported with joy, Evelyn threw himself on his knee before her, and pressed her hand to his lips.

"You have changed my whole existence by a word," he cried, as he rose to his feet. "This decides me. I will stay—I will not leave Paris. As soon as you permit me to do so, I will ask your hand from your father."

"You will ask it in vain," she replied. "My father is resolved to marry me to a millionnaire. He has told me so repeatedly of late. Were you rich, you might possibly gain his consent, but as it is, he will not listen to you."

"Then I will become rich," cried Evelyn. "In these days fortunes are made in an incredibly short space of time. I will go to the Rue Quincampoix, and speculate as others do. If I prosper, you will soon see me again. If I do not reappear in a few days, you will understand what has happened."

"Since you are resolved to speculate, I can assist you," said Colombe. "I have a hundred shares in the Compagnie d'Occident, which were given to me by Lady Catherine Law. You shall have them."

"I cannot accept the gift—even from you, Colombe," he replied, reddening.

"If your pride will not allow you to accept them, you can buy them," she said.

"But I have not a hundred thousand livres," he rejoined.

"That is not what I meant," she said. And, unlocking a casket which stood upon the table, she took a porte-feuille from it. "This pocket-book contains the shares," she added, giving it to him. "You must sell fifty for me at a thousand livres the share. All above that amount is to be yours. Are you content?"

"I will do as you tell me," he rejoined. "But there will be fifty left. What must I do with them?"

"Keep them," she returned. "They are certain to rise in value. But understand, sell for what they may hereafter, you are only to account to me for their present price. No objections—unless you would offend me."

Before Evelyn could return an answer, the door was opened, and Lady Catherine Law and M. Cossard entered.

While saluting Colombe, Cossard took her hand and raised it to his lips—a ceremony to which she evidently submitted with a very ill grace. This done, he addressed himself to Evelyn, and after bowing to him with formal politeness, observed,

"Lady Catherine Law tells me we are about to lose you, M. Harcourt. You mean to return to England, I believe?"

"My plans are undecided, sir," replied Harcourt. "Perhaps I may stay a few weeks longer."

"I am glad to hear it," said Cossard, whose looks belied his words. "I have just brought Lady Catherine a very important piece of intelligence, which you will be pleased to hear," he added. "The power and extent of our Company has this day been extraordinarily augmented. Already we possessed America, and now we have Asia and Africa. Without exaggeration, I may say the whole ocean belongs to us, since we have the monopoly of the world's commerce."

"How can this be, sir, may I venture to ask?" inquired Evelyn.

"To make the matter clear to you," replied Cossard, "I must explain that up to this period the monopoly of the East Indian trade has belonged to the Compagnie des Indes Orientales, established by Colbert in 1664, but its affairs having been badly administered, its commerce has languished for many years, and the enterprise would most probably have been abandoned, if M. Law, who felt the importance of the Indes Orientales, had not solicited its concession from the Regent, engaging to pay the debts of the company, and actively carry on its trade. This very day, as I have intimated, Colbert's company has been dissolved, and the monopoly, with all its rights and privileges, assigned to M. Law. An immediate amalgamation will be made between the Orient and the Occident, and the latter will henceforth be denominated the Compagnie des Indes."

"A proud designation indeed!" exclaimed Evelyn. "Conducted by M. Law, the enterprise cannot fail of success."

"By this new and great acquisition," pursued Cossard, "M. Law will have the sole right of trading with all the ports of the Pacific Ocean, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Straits of Magellan. Furthermore, he will have the exclusive right of trading with the East Indies, Mogul, Persia, Siam, China, and Japan, of visiting the coasts of the Red Sea, and of frequenting the Isles of Madagascar, Bourbon, and France. As you must be aware, he had previously purchased the Company of Senegal, which gave him the sole right of buying slaves, hides, elephants' tusks, and gold-dust, from Cape Bianco to Sierra Leone. I have not, therefore, affirmed too much in declaring that the Compagnie des Indes will monopolise the trade of the whole world."

"An immense monopoly indeed!" exclaimed Evelyn. "But an enormous capital will be required to pay the debts of the dissolved company and carry on its trade."

"Many millions, no doubt; but M. Law will easily find the amount," replied Cossard.

"I am curious to know in what way?" said Evelyn.

"I will tell you, for there is no secret about it, as the edict will be published to-morrow," returned Cossard. "M. Law is empowered by the Regent to issue fifty thousand new shares of five hundred livres each, payable in specie, by which a fund of twenty-five millions will be secured."

"Provided all the shares are sold," remarked Evelyn.

"Of that there is no fear," rejoined Cossard. "The difficulty will be to procure them, as you will find if you make the experiment. The shares of the Occident are already above par. Those of the new company will soon be in the same position. Before a month, I believe they will have doubled or trebled in value. Now mark well what I am going to tell you. M. Law is about to issue a decree which will have an extraordinary effect upon the original shares of the Occident, and cause them to be run after with the greatest avidity. To entitle a speculator to subscribe for one new share, he must possess four old shares. The result of this must necessarily be to increase enormously the value of the old shares, and the person who holds many of them may think himself lucky. For example, the possessor of a hundred will be able to realise two hundred thousand livres."

"You hear that," remarked Colombe, in a low voice, to Evelyn.

"On the publication of this decree," observed Cossard, with a laugh, "the actions d'Occident will be termed *les Mères*, and the new shares *les Filles*—ha! ha!"

"Very appropriate designations," observed Evelyn. "Apparently there is a brilliant prospect for the holders of the original shares."

"Magnificent! unequalled!" exclaimed Cossard. "It is a pity you have none, M. Harcourt."

"You are mistaken, sir. I am in a condition to subscribe for twenty-five new shares."

"The deuce you are!" exclaimed Cossard, looking surprised and annoyed. "How on earth did you contrive to get a hundred Occidents?"

"Never mind how I got them," replied Evelyn, taking out the porte-feuille. "Here they are."

"I'll give you two hundred thousand livres for them at once, if you are inclined to sell," said Cossard

Evelyn consulted Colombe by a glance, and as she seemed to counsel him to accede, he said, "A bargain! For two hundred thousand livres they are yours. Pray count the shares," he added, handing him the porte-feuille.

"All perfectly right," replied Cossard, examining the actions with great rapidity. "The affair can be settled in a moment, for, luckily, I happen to have a considerable sum about me."

So saying, he produced a large rouleau of billets de banque, and after counting the number required, handed them with a polite bow to Evelyn.

"We ought to apologise to the ladies," he said, "for transacting business in their presence in this manner, but the circumstances will plead our excuse."

"No apology is necessary, sir," remarked Lady Catherine Law, who had been conversing in a low tone with Colombe while the transaction took place. "I am too much accustomed to incidents of this sort to heed them."

"No doubt, miladi, no doubt," laughed Cossard.

At this moment the double door of the salon was thrown open by a couple of splendidly-attired lacqueys, while M. Thierry, the major-domo, in a loud voice announced his Highness the Duc de Bourbon and the Marquise de Prie.

X.

ADVICE FROM A WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

As these distinguished persons entered, Lady Catherine advanced to meet them, and received them with great ceremony. Before these formalities were concluded, Law himself made his appearance, evidently to the great satisfaction of the duke, who, it turned out, desired to subscribe for a large number of shares in the new Compagnie des Indes. Law professed himself most anxious to oblige his highness, but said so many actions had been allotted in the first instance to the Regent, that he had but a few at his own disposal.

"But, if I recollect right, monseigneur," he said, "you have eight hundred shares in the Occident. These will entitle you to subscribe for two hundred *filles*, as the new actions are to be designated. But if I may be permitted to advise your highness, you will only subscribe for half that number, and retain four hundred for future use. You will find your account in doing so. By judiciously negotiating your shares," he added, in a low voice, "you ought to realise eight or ten millions."

"I will follow your advice, M. Law," said the duke.

"M. Law," said the Marquise de Prie, "I understand you have given your new shares the pretty name of *filles*. I should not object to a large family of this sort —not even to a hundred *filles*."

"But, Madame la Marquise," rejoined Law, "by our arrangements, one mother can only have four daughters. Consequently, you will require four hundred *mères* to produce a hundred *filles*, and, I am sorry to say, they are not to be had."

"But I shall go distracted if I do not get some," cried the marchioness. "You must let me have a hundred."

"I am extremely sorry, madame, but it is out of my power to oblige you," said Law. "M. Cossard, one of

our directors, will tell you that the *mères* are now worth a hundred per cent. premium."

"You won't obtain them at that price from any broker in the Rue Quincampoix, Madame la Marquise," said Cossard. "But I have a hundred which I will sell for four hundred thousand livres."

"They are mine at the price," cried the marchioness, eagerly. "Have you got them with you?"

"Here they are, Madame la Marquise," replied Cossard, producing the porte-feuille. "Pray count them, madame—pray count them."

"I trust to your honour, sir," she cried. "I am sure you would not deceive me. M. le Duc, be pleased to pay M. Cossard four hundred thousand livres."

"Diable!" exclaimed the duke, testily; "it is a large sum. I have not so much about me."

"My porte-feuille is at your service, madame," said Law.

"You are excessively obliging, M. Law," she replied. "Do me the great favour to pay M. Cossard, and M. le Duc will repay you."

"Don't repay me, madame, for a month," said Law, "and in that time I hope you will have trebled or quadrupled the amount you have borrowed."

"You transact business en grand seigneur, M. Law," said the marchioness, smiling. "And now I must have a word with you, mignonne," she added, taking Colombe aside. "How is it that I find M. Harcourt here?" she added, in a low voice. "Has any change taken place in the marriage arrangements, eh?"

"No, madame," replied Colombe. "My father continues inflexible, but I am resolved not to marry M. Cossard."

"Reflect a little before you come to that decision, child," replied the marchioness. "You know I love you dearly, and may believe me when I say, it will be best to yield obedience to your father's injunctions."

"And marry M. Cossard! Impossible, Madame la Marquise."

"Listen to me, Colombe. This Cossard, whom you would cast away, will make an excellent husband. I have spoken to M. Law about him, and he assures me he is immensely rich—rich enough to buy a title—so your position in society will be assured. You will tell me you cannot bear him—that you love another—that you will be miserable, and so forth. Sottises! No young and beautiful woman, with a rich husband, can be unhappy. If you don't agree with me now, you will do so hereafter."

"You employ the same arguments as my father, Madame la Marquise, and I must reply to you as I did to him, that I do not care for money."

"You fancy not, my dear child," rejoined the marchioness; "but you are entirely mistaken. I had once such silly ideas myself, but they have long since flown. Believe me, M. Cossard is the husband for you. To M. Harcourt I have several objections. I won't specify them now, but I am sure he wouldn't make you happy. He will never be devoted to you."

"You judge him as my father judges him—from report," said Colombe.

"No, I judge him from what I have seen," rejoined the marchioness. "I could never forgive perfidy in a lover. I remember how passionately enamoured he was of the Duchesse de Berri. And if death had not snatched her away he would still be bound in her fetters."

"Don't speak of her, I pray you, madame," said Colombe, becoming agitated. "I would willingly forget the pain she caused me."

"Perhaps you will try to persuade me you were grieved by her death?" said the marchioness, rather maliciously.

"I was indeed grieved that one so beautiful and highly gifted should perish in her pride," replied Colombe. "The duchess had caused me great anguish, but, when I heard she was no more, my heart instantly melted, and I forgave her all."

"I cannot lay claim to so much amiability," rejoined

the marchioness. "However, we will say no more about the poor duchess; but, I am bound to add, she is not the only one of the court beauties who has captivated your fickle M. Harcourt."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Colombe, her agitation increasing.

"I won't pain you by any disclosures," said the marchioness; "but I advise you to think twice before you abandon M. Cossard for one on the stability of whose affection you can have no sort of dependence."

"I begin to think you are right," sighed Colombe. "After all, it would have been better if he had returned to England."

"Far better for you, undoubtedly," said the marchioness. "And so you have foolishly persuaded him to stay?"

Colombe made no reply.

At this juncture, Thierry suddenly entered, and informed Law that his royal highness the Regent had just arrived, and was alighting from his carriage.

"Pray excuse me, M. le Duc. I fly to receive his highness!" cried Law, hastily quitting the room.

XI.

OF THE CONGRATULATORY VISIT PAID BY THE REGENT TO LADY CATHERINE LAW.

LAW found the Regent in the vestibule, and, after expressing his great gratification at the honour conferred upon him, he ceremoniously conducted his illustrious visitor to the salon in which he had left Lady Catherine Law and the rest of the company.

Nothing could be more affable than the Regent's deportment towards Lady Catherine, and, after graciously returning the reverences paid him by the others, he said:

"I have come, Lady Catherine, to offer you, in person, my congratulations on the wonderful success that has attended your husband's great financial operations. He has achieved what no minister of finance has been able to accomplish—he has saved us from ruin—and restored the country to a state of unexampled prosperity."

Highly gratified, as may well be supposed, Lady Catherine acknowledged the compliment in suitable terms, and, when she had done, Law likewise expressed his thanks:

"Your highness has been pleased to give me credit for what I have done," he said, "but my operations have only just commenced. I hope to put the country in a higher position than it has ever yet attained, and enable it to give the law to the rest of the world. There shall be but one great kingdom in Europe—France—and one great city, Paris."

"Ainsi soit il!" exclaimed the Regent, well pleased.

"If you go on as you have begun, M. Law," remarked the Duc de Bourbon, "you will be able to ruin the credit of England whenever you please, break its banks, and annihilate its great East India Company."

"If I cannot do all this, M. le Duc, I can, at all events, bring down the English East India stock," replied Law.

laughing; "and that I engage to do, as soon as the Compagnie des Indes is in full operation."

"You forget, M. Law, that there is an Englishman present," remarked the good-natured Regent, glancing at Evelyn. "Your determination cannot be very agreeable to him."

"I do not feel any great uneasiness, monseigneur," replied Evelyn, who overheard the remark. "Our East India directors, I fancy, will know how to take care of themselves. But I began to think M. Law had forgotten his native land."

"Ma foi! my interests are so identified with those of France, that I am at heart a Frenchman," rejoined Law.

"We must make you one," said the Regent. "There is but one difficulty—your religion."

"And that is insuperable, monseigneur," observed Lady Catherine.

The Regent cast a significant glance at Law, but made no remark.

"Surely that charming face is not unknown to me!" pursued the prince, for the first time noticing Colombe, who was standing near the Marquise de Prie. "Is it not Mademoiselle Laborde?"

"Your highness has an excellent memory where a pretty face is concerned," replied Law, presenting Colombe, who blushed deeply as she bent to the Regent. "Mademoiselle Laborde is about to be married very shortly."

"Ah! indeed. Accept my congratulations, mademoiselle," said the Regent. "And pray who is the fortunate individual?"

"This gentleman, monseigneur," replied Law, presenting Cossard, "a director of the Compagnie des Indes, and," he added, in a lower voice, "a millionnaire."

"Ah! I understand," returned the Regent. "You are much to be envied, M. Cossard," he continued. "You will have the fairest wife in all Paris."

"Ah! monseigneur, you overwhelm me," returned Cossard, enchanted, and bowing to the ground.

"But you must not shut her up," pursued the Regent.

"You must bring her to the Palais Royal—she will be the brightest ornament of the court. I say it in all sincerity, for there is no one to compare to her. You are reputed to be very rich, M. Cossard. You ought to buy lands which will give you a title, and so add to your lovely wife's éclat."

"I am already in treaty for a château and barony in Normandy, monseigneur," replied Cossard.

"You cannot do better. Permit me a word with your fiancée."

At this intimation all the company retired, leaving Colombe standing near the Regent.

"I hope soon to see you at the Palais Royal," he said, taking her hand, and regarding her steadfastly. "I need not tell you that you are still mistress of my heart."

"Do not treat me thus, monseigneur, I beseech you," she rejoined. "I cannot listen to such language even from you, and, if you persist in it, I must withdraw."

"No, you must hear what I have to say to you," he rejoined, detaining her. "You are more beautiful than ever, Colombe. You must—you shall be mine."

"Cease!—cease, I implore you, monseigneur," she cried.

"Not till you promise compliance," he rejoined.

"I can promise nothing, save that I will never willingly appear at the Palais Royal," cried Colombe. "In the name of one who once succoured me at a moment like this, and who I feel would succour me now, if she could—in the name of the daughter you have lost, monseigneur, I beseech you to desist."

"No more!—say no more," cried the Regent, releasing her and putting his hand to his breast, as if to control a sudden pang. "You have cut me to the heart by that cruel allusion."

"Forgive me, monseigneur. I do not desire to wound your feelings, nor to revive your grief, but I make this appeal, knowing you cannot resist it."

"You are right, mademoiselle—I cannot," he said, in a tone of deep emotion. "The Duchesse de Berri loved you and would have guarded you—nay, she guards you still

"Oh! thanks, monseigneur!—In her name, thanks!"

"Let me ask you a question, which she would have asked you, mademoiselle," said the Regent, after a moment's pause, in a more serious tone than he had hitherto adopted. "And answer me as you would have answered her. Why are you about to make this mercenary match? Why do you throw away your charms on an imbecile like this Cossard? You deserve a better fate."

"M. Cossard is my father's choice, not mine, monseigneur." she replied.

"But you have consented to marry him?"

"True, monseigneur, but I have never ceased to regret that I did so."

"Your words would seem to imply that you love another. Nay, do not attempt disguise. I can read your secret in your looks. You love that young Englishman, M. Harcourt. Perhaps in a moment of jealousy you have given this rash promise to Cossard?"

"Your highness has divined the truth," she replied.

"Allons, courage!" he exclaimed. "It is not too late to remedy the error. I dare say M. Law can get you out of the difficulty."

"I am sure he can, monseigneur," she replied. "A word to him from your highness will suffice."

"Then it shall not be left unsaid," he replied, graciously.

Warmly expressing her gratitude, Colombe then retired, and, as she withdrew, the Regent mentally ejaculated, "Morbleu! it is a pity to lose so charming a creature, but the appeal she made was irresistible. I must save her from that abominable roturier, though it will cost me an effort to give her to her lover. However, she has my promise." Then motioning Evelyn to approach, he addressed him very affably, remarking that he had not seen him of late at the Palais Royal. "I suppose you have not escaped the prevailing fever, M. Harcourt," he added, "but are deeply engaged in the game of speculation at which all are now playing? If you are lucky, you may become a millionnaire, like M. Cossard."

"There is but little chance of that, I fear, monseigneur," replied Evelyn. "However, I shall try."

"Let me hear how you get on," said the Regent. "And if you want advice," he added, in a significant tone, "do not hesitate to apply to M. Law. I will speak to him in your behalf."

Evelyn bowed gratefully, and retired.

After a brief conversation with Lady Catherine Law, the Regent terminated his visit, and was ceremoniously conducted to his carriage by Law. Just before entering the vehicle, he remarked to Law, "If you have an opportunity of serving your young countryman, M. Harcourt, I beg you not to neglect it."

"I should be happy to serve him on his own account, monseigneur, for I like him," replied Law. "But, recommended by your highness, he has a double claim on my attention. Be assured I won't forget him."

"Let me make myself clear," said the Regent; "I want him to marry Colombe Laborde."

"But your highness is aware she is promised to M. Cossard. Her father's word is pledged to that gentleman. The match cannot be broken off."

"But Colombe detests the husband her father has chosen for her. She told me so herself just now."

"Ma foi, monseigneur! he is a very good man, M. Cossard, and will make her a capital husband. Your highness must excuse me. I cannot possibly interfere."

"Very well, then I must take the matter in hand myself," said the Regent.

And he stepped into his carriage.

End of the Fourth Book.

BOOK V.—LA RUE QUINCAMPOIX.

I.

THE YOUNG KING AND HIS GOVERNOR.

ONE day, at the period we have now reached, when Mr. Law's marvellous System had attained its apogee, a plan of Paris was exhibited by the Maréchal de Villeroy to the youthful Louis XV.

"What does your majesty think of it?" inquired Villeroy, seeing the young king examine it attentively.

"I am looking for the Rue Quincampoix, but cannot find it," replied Louis.

"Here it is, sire," replied the old marshal, pointing with his finger towards the centre of the map; "this narrow defile, running between the Rue Saint Denis and the Rue Saint Martin, and extending, as your majesty will observe, from the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher to the Rue-aux-Ours."

"Is it possible this can be meant for the famous Rue Quincampoix?" cried the youthful monarch. "The street should be twice as large, and it ought to have been gilded."

"A very shrewd observation, sire," replied the old courtier, bowing and smiling. "Unquestionably the Rue Quincampoix ought to be double its size to accommodate the crowds that daily resort to it, and gilding would be highly appropriate. Yet the designer of the plan is not to blame. The street is drawn by measurement. It is a narrow labyrinth, four hundred and fifty feet long, and contains under a hundred habitations, some of them ancient, but none of any pretension."

"Mon Dieu! you surprise me, M. le Maréchal," exclaimed Louis. "I thought it must be the finest street in Paris."

"It is certainly the most crowded place in your great

city, sire," returned Villeroy. "More money changes hands in the Rue Quincampoix in the course of a day than in all the rest of Paris during a week. But in itself the street has little to recommend it to notice. It is inhabited almost entirely by Jews, brokers, scriveners, usurers, money-changers, and persons of that class. Many of these have now parcelled out their habitations, and let each room, from garret to cellar, at an exorbitant rent —more than used to be paid for the whole house. In all these rooms counters are established at which business is done, and some of the bankers, at a loss for accommodation, have built guérites on the roofs. But I crave your majesty's pardon. You must find these details wearisome."

"On the contrary, M. le Maréchal," replied the young king, "they interest me exceedingly. It is only lately that I have heard so much about the Rue Quincampoix."

"Because it is only within the last few months, and since M. Law's extraordinary financial operations have driven all Paris mad, that the street has become so famous, or rather, I ought to say, so notorious. But it has always been well known, because inhabited by money-lenders. The word Quincampoix, I may remark, if your majesty will excuse my pedantry, is derived from the Latin, *quinque pagi* (five territories), and two or three villages in the neighbourhood of Paris are so called. An hotel built by the lord of one of these villages gave its name to the street. In the latter days of your majesty's great grandsire, and my sovereign and master, Louis XIV., the billets d'état were somewhat discredited, and their holders used to flock to the Rue Quincampoix to dispose of them. At that time the street occasionally presented a very animated appearance, but nothing to what it does now. I happened to be there when the first issue of shares by the Compagnie des Indes took place, and I can assure your majesty it was a wonderful sight. I was forced hither and thither, against my will, by the living stream, bewildered and deafened by the cries. All distinction of rank was gone. Nobles, ladies of title, lacqueys, priests,

cut-purses, cheats of all kinds, were mixed up pêle-mêle. With some difficulty, and not without the loss of my purse and porte-feuille, I extricated myself from the throng, and sought refuge in M. Tourton's bank, where I was detained for more than an hour. At either end of the street there are iron grilles, which are shut by order of M. de Machault, lieutenant-general of police, from nine at night to six in the morning. As soon as the clock strikes nine drums are beaten by the guard stationed at these gates, and the crowd is driven out by a patrol. Without this precaution, the place would never be at rest. On the occasion to which I have just referred, all the adjacent streets were filled with carriages."

"I should like to see the street when thus crowded," said the young king. "I have promised M. Law to go there some day."

"Apparently, M. Law is in great favour with your majesty?"

"Yes, I like him very much. I am always sorry when he quits my presence, and that is more than I can say for every one who approaches me."

"M. Law is an agreeable man, sire, and a very skilful financier, but I fear he will do infinite mischief to the community."

"Your opinion of him is very different from that of the Regent, who tells me M. Law has saved the country from bankruptcy and ruin. Our coffers were empty, and M. Law has replenished them—so the Regent says. Trade was dead, and M. Law has reanimated it. Money was scarce, and it is now plentiful. Many of my subjects, who were plunged in misery and want, are now happy and prosperous. These benefits have been conferred upon the nation, my uncle says, by M. Law. If so, I ought to feel exceedingly grateful to him."

"This confounded adventurer has obtained greater influence over his majesty than I could have supposed," thought Villeroy. "It must be my business to undo it. —It is to be hoped that this prosperous state of things may last, sire," he added aloud.

"What do you apprehend?" cried the young king, quickly.

"I fear the brilliant bubble blown by M. Law may burst, sire."

"You are unjust to M. Law. You don't know what he can do. My uncle tells me he has undertaken to pay off the state debt of fifteen millions."

"Oh! he will promise anything, sire. But can he perform his promise?"

"Yes, I believe he will. And if he does, I shall make him comptroller-general, on my uncle's recommendation."

"Even if M. Law were eligible to the post, sire, which he is not, owing to his religion, he would make a very indifferent minister of finance," observed Villeroy; "and your majesty would do wrong so to appoint him."

"It is plain you are M. Law's enemy, M. le Maréchal," remarked Louis.

"Not his enemy, sire, but I confess that I distrust him," responded Villeroy. "And I feel bound in duty to caution your majesty against him."

"My confidence in M. Law is not to be shaken," replied the young monarch. "But I have something to tell you. The Regent wishes me to give a ball at the Tuileries to the young nobility."

"A charming idea!" exclaimed Villeroy. "Your majesty will have an opportunity of seeing the future members of your court. I shall be delighted to arrange the fête. I will draw up a programme, and submit a list of those whom it may be proper to honour with an invitation. None but scions of the nobility can be your majesty's guests."

"Two exceptions must be made—Mademoiselle Law and her brother."

"I am astounded, sire. I understood this was to be a ball given to the young nobility."

"You understood aright, M. le Maréchal."

"Then permit me to observe, sire, that Mademoiselle Law and her brother are inadmissible."

"Permit me, in my turn, to observe, M. le Maréchal, that I have already invited them."

"How! invited them? I fear the step will give great offence to your proud noblesse, sire, and it will surprise me if Mademoiselle Law and her brother pass a very pleasant evening."

"Any affront to them will be an affront to me, and I shall resent it, and so I am sure will my uncle the Regent," returned the young king, with dignity.

"I hope nothing of the kind may occur, sire, and I will do my best to prevent it; but I cannot control others."

"I will take care of my guests," said Louis, with spirit. "If no one else will dance with Mademoiselle Law, I will dance with her the whole evening, and the Regent, I am sure, will find partners for her brother."

"Opposition will only irritate him, so I must concede," thought Villeroy. "But the ball shall not take place—on that I am determined. Your majesty's wishes are law to me," he added aloud. "When is the ball to take place?"

"I shall fix the day with the Regent," replied Louis. "He will be here presently with M. Law."

"Again M. Law!" mentally ejaculated Villeroy. "Perdition take him!"

"At the same time," pursued the young king, "I shall ask my uncle to take me to the Rue Quincampoix. M. Law will attend us."

"As your governor, sire, it will be my duty to attend you," remarked Villeroy. "I cannot be left out."

"I have no wish to leave you out," said Louis; "but I must have M. Law."

"But, sire, his attendance will be quite superfluous. I can explain everything to you."

"I don't doubt it," replied Louis. "But M. Law, and no one else, shall be my cicerone."

II.

THE MISSISSIPPIANS.

At this epoch there was no Exchange in Paris, as at London and Amsterdam, to which merchants, dealers, bankers, and foreigners could resort, though Law intended to build one, and with that view had purchased six large houses in the Rue Vivienne, lying between the garden of the Hôtel Mazarin and the Rue Colbert. These habitations were to have been pulled down and a splendid structure erected on their site, which should comprise the Exchange and the Post-office, then situated in the Rue Bourdonnais, but, unluckily, the design was frustrated.

As there was no Exchange, there were no regular stock-brokers, and this business was transacted by the bankers, money-dealers, discounters and scriveners, established in the Rue Quincampoix. Here it was, a few years previously, that the discredited billets d'état had been bought and sold, and a greal deal of business was done in this way; but it was on the establishment of the Compagnie d'Occident, and the issue of its shares, that the street first began to assume the character of an Exchange. When the Anti-System commenced the speculators were doubled in number, and the spirit of gambling, which afterwards burnt with such unparalleled fury, was fairly kindled. At this time the jobbers divided themselves into two parties—one supporting Law, and the other the Frères Paris.

For a brief period, owing to the dexterous management of its directors, the Anti-System had the advantage, and it was the opinion of many shrewd speculators that Law would be defeated, but they knew not with whom they had to deal. The aspect of affairs was totally changed, when, the Orient being incorporated with the Occident, Law was enabled to give to his company the

proud designation of Compagnie des Indes. It was then that the wonderful resources of his genius became manifest, and his opponents found, to their dismay, that they could no longer compete with him.

The issue of the fifty thousand new shares, which were designated *les Filles*, produced an extraordinary effect. The subscription was at once filled up, and such was the ardour of the Mississippians, as the jobbers in the Rue Quincampoix were styled, to purchase them, that they speedily rose to two hundred per cent., throwing the shares of the Fermes Générales completely into the shade.

Determined to crush his rivals, Law next joined to the enormous privileges already enjoyed by the Compagnie des Indes the administration of the Mint, which he purchased from the government for nine years, at the price of fifty millions. This important acquisition, which materially tended to consolidate his power, enabled him to issue fifty thousand more actions at five hundred livres each.

The issue of these shares, which were designated *les Petites Filles*, created a perfect fureur among the Mississippians, and it was at this juncture that the vast crowds we have described began to assemble daily in the Rue Quincampoix. Driven almost to despair, the supporters of the Anti-System sought to strike a heavy blow against Law by presenting for payment a vast number of billets de banque, which they had collected for the purpose. But Law, warned of their design, issued a decree reducing the value of specie from that day, so that the mischievous schemers, among whom were D'Argenson and the Prince de Conti, were checkmated.

Justly indignant, Law took speedy and severe vengeance upon his adversaries. He proposed to the Regent to take on lease the whole of the Fermes Générales, and to lend the government twelve hundred millions at three per cent., to be employed in paying off the state-creditors. This offer was accepted, and D'Argenson, who was not even consulted in the affair, was compelled, to his infinite rage and mortification, to annul the contract he had en-

tered into with the Frères Paris, and so give with his own hand the coup-de-grace to the Anti-System.

Thus Law's triumph was complete. By a subsequent arrangement, the loan to the State was raised to fifteen hundred millions.

This financial revolution was accomplished in a wonderfully short space of time by a series of ordinances, so contrived by Law as to throw the Mississippians in a perfect state of frenzy. The operation was conducted in this manner. Warrants were delivered by the government to its creditors, made payable by the Compagnie des Indes. On his part, Law commenced by issuing a hundred thousand new shares of the nominal value of five hundred livres each, but reserving to himself a premium equal to that obtained by the old shares, which, being a thousand per cent., raised them to five thousand livres. These shares, which were called *les Cinq Cents*, were purchasable in ten payments of five hundred livres each. The empressement of the public to procure the *Cinq Cents* was prodigious. Never had been anything like it. Every one was seized as with a vertigo. There were no conditions, as in the case of the *Filles* and *Petites Filles*. A share, which would ensure a fortune, could be obtained on payment of five hundred livres to a cashier of the Compagnie. The public avidity seemed insatiable. On the announcement of the subscription, the Rue Vivienne was filled by a maddened and tumultuous crowd, struggling towards the gates of the Hôtel Mazarin, which were guarded by a detachment of archers. Not only were the bureaux of the cashiers continually besieged, but the ante-chambers, the staircases, and the courts of the hotel. "During several days and several nights," says Lemontey, "a phalanx advanced towards the bureau of exchange, like a compact column, which neither sleep, nor hunger, nor thirst could disperse. But, on the fatal cry announcing the delivery of the last subscription, all disappeared."

The Hôtel Law was beset in like manner, and heavy bribes and the most extraordinary stratagems, to which

we shall have occasion to refer presently, were resorted to to obtain access to him. In like manner, the porters of the company received large douceurs to enter the names of subscribers, while some persons, disguised in Law's livery, succeeded in obtaining prompt admittance to the bureaux. As the price of shares rose from hour to hour, so did the fury of the crowd to possess the magic papers increase. Amid this frenzied excitement, the only tranquil persons were the bankers and brokers in the Rue Quincampoix, and they were easy because they knew that shares would be brought them, which had been indirectly secured by the various employés of the company, and which could only be disposed of by their agency.

An admirable picture of the Rue Quincampoix at this period has been given by Duhautchamp, an eye-witness of the scenes he has so well described. "This famous street," he says, "which for time out of mind had been the rendezvous of dealers in paper, was chosen as a place wherein to hold their meetings by those who laboured at the birth of the System, and the bankers, since become excessively opulent, began to deal in the shares of the Compagnie d'Occident, and those of the Anti-System. In this place also were seen flying about the state securities, although proscribed because they had not been submitted to the Visa. Here also were negotiated the billets d'état, which, notwithstanding the reduction they had already undergone at the hands of the tribunal, lost half. Formerly these transactions took place in the houses and bureaux, but as soon as the operations of the System began in earnest, all the Mississippians assembled publicly and bareheaded in the street. Law's first steps having excited opposite opinions, they began by talking over the news, incidentally referring to matters of business in imitation of the merchants who daily frequent the Exchanges of London and Amsterdam. In proportion as the shares of the Compagnie d'Occident rose in favour these assemblies increased, and the amalgamation of the company with that of the Indies still further augmented the numbers

but when the Anti-System was despoiled of the Fermes Générales, this event, combined with other surprising circumstances that rapidly followed, brought to the place all those who had funds as well as those who had not: the former to buy and sell ten and twenty times a day, and the latter to practise the business of a broker. Others, foreseeing that the ground of this street would mount to so high a price that ten feet square would fetch the price of a seigneurial territory, seized upon all the houses to let as well as apartments, to sub-let them in detail to the stock-jobbers, who now rushed thither in a crowd to establish their bureaux. This foresight enriched those who turned it to profit. The bureaux were let for two, three, and even four hundred livres a month, according to size; whence it will be judged what must have been the profits of a house containing thirty or forty bureaux. All the houses in the Rue Quincampoix and in the adjoining streets were divided into bureaux, not excepting even the garrets and cellars. A cobbler, who worked under four planks set against the garden-wall of the famous banker, Tourton, transformed his humble shed into a bureau, furnishing it with seats for the accommodation of ladies whom curiosity drew to the spot; and finding his idea succeed he abandoned his old business, and provided pens and paper for those who conducted their business in his shop, by which means he gained two hundred livres a day. The successive movements of the System, joined to the feverish agitation of the public, rendered the famous Rue Quincampoix more flourishing than ever. The highest and most notable persons in the kingdom might there be seen familiarly mingling with the vilest dealers. Nobles did not hesitate to exchange their fairest lands for paper; others melted down their funds; and ladies brought the produce of their jewels. This strange frenzy irritating the cupidity of the great dealers, caused the shares to rise with astonishing rapidity. The manner of doing business resembled the flux and ebb of the sea. The striking of a clock in the bureau of a skilful dealer named Papillon caused the

shares to rise, because the emissaries and clerks of this personage went amongst the crowd and to the different bureaux, asking for shares at any price. The public, always ready to follow the stream, did the same, alarming those who had previously sold, and who, rejoining the throng, hastened to buy again, while the agents of the manœuvre, having accomplished their object, slipped away. Two hours later, at the sound of a whistle from the bureau of Fleury, an accomplice in the manœuvre, other emissaries went about in all directions like the first, offering to sell at any price, until the shares fell as quickly as they had risen. This was the ebb. Both movements were accompanied by a tumultuous roar among the crowd, that resembled the noise of waves agitated by the wind."

The concourse in the Rue Quincampoix was not entirely composed of Parisians. Every province of France was there largely represented, though it was remarked that the Gascons predominated, and, owing to their excitable temperament, were the noisiest and most eager speculators. So great was the affluence of strangers to Paris at this time that the hotels were filled to overflowing, and hundreds were daily arriving from all parts of the country. All the public carriages coming from Marseilles, Lyons, Aix, Bordeaux, Strasbourg, and Brussels were retained for a couple of months, and the tickets for the seats disposed of at double or treble price. When the System was at its height, it is estimated that there were five hundred thousand strangers in Paris, and most of these found their way at one time or other to the Rue Quincampoix. The bureaux were kept by Germans, Swiss, Italians, Dutchmen, Englishmen, Flemings, or by persons from Languedoc, Provence, Dauphiny, Normandy, and Lorraine—scarcely one belonged to a Parisian. As the crowd was composed of people of all countries, all languages were spoken—Dutch, German, English, Spanish, and Italian—so that the place was a perfect Babel.

Many changes have been made in the Rue Quincampoix since the period of our story, but it still retains something of its former picturesque aspect. In several

of the older houses may be noted balconies of iron, very curiously and elaborately wrought, stone sculptures, and ponderous oaken doors, studded with broad-headed nails, and clamped with iron. All these existed in Law's time. Close to the Rue-aux-Ours there is a singular old house, standing en vedette in the street. This was the residence of M. Tourton, the banker. In the reign of Louis Philippe the Rue Quincampoix was cut in twain by the Rue Rambuteau. During the construction of the broad and magnificent Boulevart de Sébastopol, by M. Hausseman, many of the dark and tortuous labyrinths in this quarter were swept away; but the Rue Quincampoix was spared. It is still the centre of considerable traffic; but instead of the bankers, the stockbrokers, and scriveners of days gone by, its present occupants are curriers, confectioners, druggists, dealers in wine, and vendors of caoutchouc.

III.

LAW'S VAST POSSESSIONS.

Law was now the popular idol. By the vulgar he was reverenced as a supernatural being. Addresses and petitions were showered upon him. Honours of all kinds were paid him. His name was coupled with that of the youthful sovereign, and when the Academy of Sciences elected him as a member, he was saluted on his entrance by shouts of "Vivent le Roi et Monseigneur Law!"

All that was distinguished in Paris flocked to pay him court, and his ante-chambers were more crowded than those of the Palais Royal. Adulation the most extraordinary was paid to Lady Catherine Law, and if she had been a queen she could scarcely have received greater homage than was now constantly paid her by ladies of

the highest rank. Duchesses and marchionesses, on approaching her, made a profound reverence, and kissed her hand. Marks of attention equally flattering, and from the same exalted personages, were shown to little Kate Law, and, although she was not of an age to marry, several highly important offers were made her. At a magnificent ball given for her by her father, and which was attended by the élite of the nobility, the first to arrive was the Nuncio, who saluted her as the queen of the fête, and kissed her on the forehead.

The manner in which Law was beset amounted to persecution. Ladies of the highest quality passed days and nights in his ante-chambers awaiting the opening of his doors. His major-domo, Thierry, frequently received a thousand crowns to convey a letter to his master, and double the amount if he could procure an interview for the writer.

Mr. Law still continued to occupy his hotel in the Place Vendôme, but he had greatly embellished it, and now possessed a superb collection of pictures and a noble gallery of sculpture. His entertainments were frequent, and of regal splendour.

A portion of his enormous capital had been invested in the purchase of vast seigneurial properties, fourteen of which he had already acquired. The duchy of Mercœur was ceded to him by the Princess Dowager of Condé for 870,000 livres, and a bonus of 100,000. For the marquisate of Effiat he gave 2,300,000. For the earldom of Tancarville and the barony of Hallebosc he gave 650,000 livres in specie, and 7410 in contingent annuities. Besides these he bought the princely domains of Guermande en Brie; Roissy (which cost him a million); Saint Germain (which cost another million), Domfront, La Marche, and Ligny. Understanding that M. de Novion, President à Mortier, had a fine estate to sell, Law paid him a visit, and said,

"I am told that you ask four hundred thousand livres for your estate. Permit me to say that is scarcely a fair price. I offer you four hundred and fifty thousand."

"I am charmed with your mode of doing business, M. Law," rejoined De Novion. "But I cannot take advantage of your liberality. The estate is yours at the sum I originally named, but I must annex one condition to the bargain—a mere trifle, however, which cannot possibly affect our arrangement. Instead of billets de banque, you shall pay me in louis d'or."

Law immediately perceived his drift, but affecting the most perfect indifference, replied,

"You give me an agreeable surprise, M. le Président. Nothing is more easy of fulfilment than your condition. You shall have the purchase-money in gold as you require."

In Paris, besides his private hotel in the Place Vendôme, the Hôtel Mazarin and the six adjacent houses in the Rue Vivienne, Law had bought the hotel of the Comte de Tessé for 150,000 livres; the Hôtel de Soissons from the Prince de Carignan for 1,400,000 livres; the Hôtel de Rambouillet; and a vast plot of ground near the Porte Montmartre, on which he intended to erect the Mint.

Among the many important personages who had profited by the system, the chief gainer was the Duc de Bourbon, who, favoured in every way by Law, had made twenty millions by the great coup-de-main which occurred on the reimbursement of the rents. It was estimated that the duke's total profits exceeded sixty millions. These enormous gains enabled him to pay off all his liabilities, and to rebuild Chantilly, and he gave a grand fête to the Regent which lasted five days and nights, and cost five millions. The duke was one day boasting of the number of his actions to M. Turmenies, when the latter reproved him, by saying, "Fi, monseigneur. One of your great-grandsire's actions was worth all yours."

What Dubois gained can only be surmised, but he took what he pleased. The Duc d'Antin gained twelve millions, and the Prince de Conti became hostile to Law because he was only allowed four millions. The Regent's

favourites of both sexes received immense sums, and Nocé, De Canillac, and Brancas were each gratified with fifty thousand livres.

Having a richer mine than any in Potosi or Peru ever open to him, the Regent, whose prodigality was boundless, applied to it without scruple. Law answered all his demands, and as there was always a partisan to gain, a mistress to pension, or a favourite to enrich, these applications were incessant. In some instances the Regent's munificence was well applied. He bestowed a million upon the Hôtel Dieu, another on the Hospice Général, and a third on the Enfants-Trouvés. Moreover, fifteen hundred thousand livres were employed by him in the liberation of prisoners for debt.

IV.

A COUPLE OF OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

ONE morning, when Law was alone in his cabinet, occupied with a vast pile of letters and papers which had been left for his inspection, his major-domo entered, and said two gentlemen were without who were particularly anxious to have an interview with him.

"Why do you interrupt me thus, Thierry?" cried Law, angrily. "You know I won't see any one. I am busy. I am engaged. Tell the gentlemen so. They must wait till the doors of the ante-chamber are opened if they desire to see me. I will grant no private interview."

"Possibly monseigneur may feel inclined to make an exception in favour of these two gentlemen, when I mention that they are his compatriots, and had the honour of his acquaintance some years ago in London. They are Sir Terence O'Flaherty and Sir Patrick Molloy," said

Thierry, referring to the cards which he carried on a salver. "Perhaps monseigneur may recollect them. They are rather droll in manner, but the English—begging monseigneur's pardon—are somewhat odd and eccentric."

"Judging from their names, they must be Irishmen, not Englishmen," observed Law. "I don't remember to have heard of them before. However, admit them."

Thierry bowed and departed, and shortly afterwards ushered in two extraordinary individuals, whose deportment was so ridiculously grotesque, that the habitual gravity of the stately major-domo was greatly disturbed, and he had to beat a precipitate retreat in order to avoid laughing outright.

Both personages were as grand as embroidered velvet coats of the latest mode, powdered perukes, laced ruffles and cravats, diamond-hilted swords, diamond buckles and red-heeled shoes could make them, but their uncouth manner and absurd grimaces showed they were wholly unaccustomed to such finery.

Law eyed them with astonishment, and at first with displeasure; but suddenly a light seemed to break upon him, and his countenance relaxed into a smile.

"Unless my memory deceives me, we have met before, Sir Terence," he said, addressing the foremost of the two, who still continued bowing and scraping, "but under rather different circumstances."

"Yer lordship is right," replied Sir Terence. "The circumstances was rayther different. Then my friend Pat—Sir Patrick, I mane—and myself was two poor cheermen, glad to airn a crown, and now, thanks to yer lordship, we've plenty of bank-notes in our pockets, and are able to ride in a gilt coach, with futmen at the back ov it, as proud as the Lord Mayor ov Lunnun."

"By the powers! it was a lucky day for me and Sir Terence when we tuk yer hon'r to White's Coffee-house," added the other. "You towld us then you could teach us how to make a hundred guineas out ov one, and we were fools enough not to believe you, but now the words has come true. A few guineas has made both our fortins."

"I am rejoiced to hear of your success," replied Law. "But pray sit down, and tell me all about it."

"I thank your lordship," replied Sir Terence, "but Sir Patrick and myself couldn't think of sitting down in your presence. Your lordship must know, then, that all Lunnun has been ringin' for the last six months wi' your wonderful doings, and in coorse we couldn't help hearin' ov 'em, so says I to my mate, 'Pat,' says I, 'may I nivir taste usquebaugh agin if the great Mister Laa they talk so much about ain't the jontleman as we used to carry. I tell you wot it is, Pat,' says I, 'I mane to go to Paris myself and see his hon'r, and maybe he'll teach me how to make my fortin.' 'I'll go with you,' says he. This was aisier said than done, and we might have tarried in Lunnun to this blessed day, but luckily some persons ov quality brought us wid them to Paris. Well, to make a long story short, on our arrival Pat and I puts our funds together, and we finds we have jist ten guineas, and wid this sum we goes to Mister Hopkinson, the English broker in the Rue Quinquagesimy, and we buys a share of him, and so makes a start. Before an hour we had sold that share for a hundred times what we guv for it, so thinkin' ourselves in a run ov luck, we goes on buyin' and sellin' all day long, and all next day, and all the day after that, for a week. And at the end ov that time we finds ourselves masters ov a mint ov money. All this we owes to yer lordship."

"Not so, my good friends; you owe it to your own cleverness."

"Divil a bit could we have made two hundred thousand livres, if yer lordship hadn't set up this wonderful System—a lottery in which there's all prizes and no blanks. Well, having got rich, we have set up as jontlemen, have bought the finest clothes and the handsomest periwigs to be had for money, have taken grand rooms in an hotel in the Rue Saint Honoré, close by, have bought a grand gilt coach, and hired a coachman and a couple of futmen, and, in order to get on in society, have put a handle to our names. My friend is Sir Patrick, and I am Sir Terence, at yer lordship's service."

"By the powers! we're so transmogrified by these Mounseers, that our own mothers wouldn't know their sons," cried Sir Patrick. "I am going to take a few lessons in dancin' and fencin', and then my edication will be complait."

"Well, my good friends, I am very glad to see you," observed Law, "and I must congratulate you once more on your good luck. But the best advice I can give you is to return to London as quickly as you can."

"Lunnon won't do after Paris," remarked Sir Terence. "We know when we're well off. We go daily to the Rue Quinquagesimy, and pick up a few thousand livres, and mighty pleasant pastime it is."

"Take care some of the brokers there are not too sharp for you in the end," said Law. "Fortunes are just as quickly lost as made. And I again strongly recommend you to be content with what you have gained, and to take care of it."

"Sich advice sounds strange from yer lordship, who has turned all the world crazy wi' speculation," observed Sir Terence. "But we can't follow it."

"Well, if you get into any difficulties, apply to me," said Law. "And be upon your guard, for Paris at this moment swarms with sharpers and adventurers. And now, my friends," he added, touching a bell, "you must excuse me for terminating the interview, but I have many important matters to attend to. I am very glad to have seen you, and shall be happy to see you again."

"We won't fail to present ourselves on some other occasion," said Sir Terence, "and we thank yer lordship for the great kindness and condescension you have shown us."

At this moment the major-domo appeared, and, with many grotesque congees, the two knights of Saint Patrick withdrew.

V.

HOW MR. LAW ENGAGED A NEW COACHMAN.

Law then addressed himself once more to his papers; but he was not allowed to remain long undisturbed. Thierry again appeared, and said:

"Hippolyte, the coachman, begs permission to speak with monseigneur."

"Peste take him!" cried Law. "What does he want with me? Send him to my steward, M. le Blanc."

"Perhaps monseigneur will be good enough to hear him. Apparently, he has a favour to ask."

"Yes, a great favour, monseigneur," said the coachman, who had followed Thierry into the room.

"Ah! you are there, Hippolyte," cried Law. "Approach, mon ami, and tell me what you desire. But how comes it that I find you in plain clothes? What have you done with your livery?"

"I am come to ask monseigneur to do me the great favour to discharge me," replied Hippolyte.

"Discharge you! No, no, mon ami—anything but that. I am perfectly content with you, and so is Lady Catherine, and you are an especial favourite with Mademoiselle Law and my son."

"I have always endeavoured to give you satisfaction, monseigneur, and I am proud that my humble services have been appreciated."

"Then what do you complain of?" cried Law.

"I don't complain of anything, monseigneur—far from it," said Hippolyte. "I couldn't have a better or more generous master. I would rather serve monseigneur than the Regent himself."

"In that case, why do you desire to leave me? Without compliment, you are the best coachman in Paris. I cannot part with you. If you want higher wages, speak! We shan't fall out on that score."

"Monseigneur, I repeat I am extremely concerned to leave you. But I must go. The fact is, monseigneur, I have borrowed a leaf from your book. I have been extremely lucky in my speculations in the Rue Quincampoix, and am rich enough to keep my own carriage."

"Diable! then there is no more to be said. But if you leave me thus at a moment's notice, what the deuce am I to do for a coachman?"

"Monseigneur, I would stay, rather than you should be in the slightest degree inconvenienced," replied Hippolyte; "but I have taken care to provide a successor to the siège I have vacated. Will it please you to see him?"

And as Law nodded, he went to the door, and introduced two well-grown men, both evidently of his own late vocation.

"Voilà! Auguste, monseigneur," he said, indicating the foremost of them. "He has lived four years with the Duc de Bouillon. This young man is André, monseigneur," pointing to the other. "He has lived with the Prince de Soubise. I can confidently recommend them both."

"I am obliged to you for your consideration, M. Hippolyte," said Law; "but you have gone beyond the mark. I don't require two coachmen."

"Oh! that is quite understood, monseigneur," returned Hippolyte. "Select whichever you prefer. I will take the other."

"Well, then, my choice falls upon André," said Law.

"I shall be proud to serve you, monseigneur," said the fortunate individual, bowing, "and I don't think you will regret the choice you have made."

"Your wages will be the same as those of M. Hippolyte," said Law. "But you must enter upon your duties at once."

"I will explain all to him, monseigneur," replied the ci-devant coachman.

And, bowing respectfully, he retired with the two candidates for the box.

VI.

MORE OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

ENTRANCE could not be obtained to the vestibule of the Hôtel Law without a considerable fee to the tall Swiss porters stationed there. Another heavy fee was required by the lacqueys stationed at the doors of the ante-chamber; and a third and yet larger fee would alone adduce the major-domo, Thierry, to convey a message to his master.

When the doors of the ante-chamber were at last opened, the scene was most extraordinary. The crowd, consisting almost entirely of persons of the highest rank, princes, dukes, peers, marshals, generals, prelates, duchesses, peeresses, and other ladies, distinguished for beauty as for birth, who had been waiting for hours, all flocked in to pay their court to Law, and solicit shares and subscriptions from him. Sometimes the ladies completely surrounded him, and would not let him go till they had obtained compliance with their requests.

Audiences like these, which, as we have said, outshone those of the Palais Royal in number and importance of the company, might be gratifying to Law's vanity, but they soon became wearisome and almost intolerable, and had it not been to please Lady Catherine, he would have put an end to them.

On the morning when the two Irishmen, by dint of a heavy bribe to Thierry, managed to gain access to Law, there was a great crowd, almost entirely composed of ladies of rank in the ante-chamber. Many of them had come at an early hour, and their patience had been severely tried. At last the doors were thrown open by Thierry and the other valets, and Law, with Lady Catherine, their youthful son, Mademoiselle Law, and Colombe, were discovered in the inner salon.

A general rush towards Law was made by the ladies,

but he checked their advance by exclaiming, "You are too late, mesdames—you are too late. The subscription-list is closed. Not a single share is left."

At this announcement murmurs of disappointment arose from them all, but they were presently consoled by Law, who told them that a new issue of shares would be made in a week, and that all their names should be placed on the list.

"You have only to inscribe them in the visitors' book before you leave, and they shall be transferred to the register," he said.

Satisfied by this assurance, they hastened to make their reverences to Lady Catherine Law, bending before her, and kissing her hand as if she were a queen, complimenting Mademoiselle Law and Colombe, and bestowing marks of admiration on the great financier's son, then a pretty boy of twelve. This done, they hurried away to inscribe their names as directed—a process which could not be accomplished without another fee.

So anxious were these titled dames to be first on the list, that the room was quickly cleared, and at length only one lady was left.

Though she could no longer be called young, being about the same age as Lady Catherine herself, this lady was still very handsome, and of distinguished appearance and manner. Her attire was of the latest Parisian mode, and of extreme richness, but it was easy to see she was an Englishwoman. With her were two gentlemen, well dressed and of polished manners, but unmistakably from the same country as herself.

"Voilà! une belle dame Anglaise, maman," whispered Catherine Law, as the lady approached.

Up to this moment, Lady Catherine had paid no attention whatever to the lady in question, but she now regarded her, and the moment she did so, a sudden change came over her countenance.

On her part, the lady, who had been led on by one of the gentlemen, stood still, and after a moment's pause, during which Lady Catherine gazed at her as if she

beheld a ghost, she said in low, familiar accents, which vibrated through her hearer's frame, "Don't you know me, Kate? Don't you recognise your own Belinda?"

With an irrepressible cry of surprise and delight, Lady Catherine, who was seated on a large fauteuil, sprang to her feet, and tenderly embraced her. Still she could scarcely believe that she held her long-lost friend in her arms, and once more keenly scrutinised her features.

"Yes, yes, I can no longer doubt," she cried. "I see it is my beloved Belinda, whom I have so long mourned as dead. Welcome back to life, my dearest friend!—welcome to your ever constant Kate, who has never ceased to think of you—never ceased to deplore your supposed tragical fate. Ah! why, dearest Belinda, why have you allowed me to shed so many useless tears? But I am too happy now to reproach you. But where is my husband?"

"He is here," replied Law, who had been roused by Lady Catherine's cry of astonishment; "and he is as much amazed as yourself at this wonderful revival. But are you really alive, madam?" he added to Belinda. "You certainly look like flesh and blood, and yet you ought to be a spirit."

"You will find me much the same Belinda as of old," she replied; "but if you persist in thinking, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that I belong to the world of spirits, I must bring forward my husband to vouch for me that I am a living woman."

"I will vouch for it," said the personage appealed to, who was no other than the Hon. Charles Carrington, saluting Law and Lady Catherine. "If you are a ghost, you are a very charming one."

"I am lost in wonder!" exclaimed Law. "However, my amazement must not prevent me from expressing the pleasure I feel at meeting my friends again. I am delighted to see you, Carrington, and you, too, Sir Harry Archer," he added, shaking hands heartily with them both.

"And now, Belinda," said Lady Catherine to her friend,

"you must gratify my curiosity, and let me know by what means you escaped the dreadful fate intended for you by your jealous monster of a husband. All the world thought you had perished by poison."

"Luckily, the potion administered to me by Mr. Wilson was a powerful opiate, and not a poisonous mixture," replied Belinda; "but I fear he intended to kill me. Such was the effect of the draught, that animation was suspended for more than two days, and all thought me lifeless, and even the coroner himself, and the surgeon who accompanied him, came to the same conclusion. And now comes the strangest part of my strange story. The coroner's dreadful business over—fortunately, I was unconscious of it—orders were given for my immediate interment, and I was actually placed in my coffin."

"I saw you laid in it, my love," exclaimed Lady Catherine, with a thrill of horror, "and thought, while kissing your cold, pale brow, that I was bidding you an eternal adieu."

"Friends do not often meet again on earth after such a parting," said Belinda. "On that very night the soporific effect of the potion passed away, and the death-like lethargy, in which my senses had been so long wrapped, fled. I heaved a sigh, and slightly stirred, but both sigh and movement reached the ears of my faithful and sorrowing Martha, who watched by her mistress, and, though frightened at first, she soon ascertained that I was living, and released me. Had my restoration been delayed for a few hours longer, I should have only escaped one frightful death to meet another yet more terrible. But I was saved."

"Go on—I can scarcely breathe," cried Lady Catherine.

"By Martha's attentions I was soon brought completely to myself, and made acquainted with all that occurred," pursued Belinda; "but the shock well-nigh bereft me of my senses again. Yet, even while I was in that state, a strange idea crossed me. I felt sick of the world, and, as it supposed me dead, no one but Martha should know that I was still living I communicated my design to her. She

endeavoured to dissuade me from it, but at last yielded to my entreaties, and at my request bore me to her own room, and placed me in her own bed. This done, she returned, and filled the coffin with some lumber—what, I know not, but it answered the purpose, and imposed upon the men, who next morn fastened the coffin down. The funeral ceremony then took place; the coffin with its contents were entombed, and I had disappeared from the world."

"A strange story indeed!" exclaimed Lady Catherine. "But what happened next?"

"As soon as I could do so with safety, I withdrew into the country with Martha, and took a pretty cottage near Windsor, where I lived in perfect retirement for several years, happier than I had ever been since my marriage, and scarcely regretting the world I had quitted. If I could have seen you, Kate, I should have been perfectly content, but you had left England with your husband. I had taken all my jewels with me, and the sale of these useless ornaments supplied me with ample funds. I have said I was happy in my little cottage, and so I was; and I might have been there still, had not chance brought Charles Carrington into the neighbourhood. We met. An explanation ensued, and, after many entreaties, Charlie prevailed upon me to appear in the world again. Six months ago we were married. Now you have the whole of my history."

"Let me add, Lady Catherine," said Carrington, "that my wife would never let me rest till I agreed to bring her to Paris to see you and Mr. Law. So here we are."

"And enchanted I am to see you," cried Lady Catherine. "But why didn't you write to me, Belinda?"

"Because I wished to give you an agreeable surpri You know I'm a very odd person, Kate."

VII.

THE EARL OF ISLAY AND LORD BELHAVEN.

"Ah! how little you are altered, Belinda!" Lady Catherine exclaimed, steadfastly regarding the features of her long-lost friend. "It is fifteen years since we met—quite a life—and yet you are just the same—just the same!"

"If you are changed at all, Kate, it is for the better," replied Belinda, tenderly squeezing the other's hand, and looking into her face, as she spoke. "I declare you are handsomer than ever."

"Flatterer!" cried Lady Catherine. "But I must introduce my children to you," she added, presenting them.

"I think I should have known them anywhere, from their likeness to Mr. Law," said Belinda, tenderly embracing them. "But who is this?" she added, glancing at Colombe. "Is it not Mademoiselle Laborde?"

"It is," replied Lady Catherine, very much surprised. "But how comes it that you have made such a good guess? Have you heard of Colombe before?"

"I have," replied Belinda, smiling. "Only a few days before we left London, my husband received a letter in which a great deal was said about her."

"You hear that, Colombe?" said Lady Catherine, turning to her. "Mrs. Carrington says that some one has written about you to her husband."

"And in very rapturous terms, too, I can assure you, mademoiselle," said Belinda; "though I must say, now I have the pleasure of seeing you, that the praises lavished upon your beauty were richly deserved. And if your looks don't belie you, you must be quite as amiable as you have been represented."

"A truce to this nonsense, Belinda. You'll turn her

head," observed Lady Catherine. "She doesn't know you as well as I do."

"She will know me better by-and-by, I hope," observed Belinda. "Can't you guess who wrote the letter?" she added to Colombe, who blushed deeply.

"I can," interposed little Kate. "It was Mr. Evelyn Harcourt."

"Quite right, my dear, it was Mr. Harcourt," replied Belinda, smiling. "I must explain to you, mademoiselle," she added to Colombe, "that Evelyn is my husband's cousin. We have seen him since our arrival in Paris. You won't wonder, now, that I take an interest in you. I hope we shall be great friends."

"I hope so indeed, madame," replied Colombe, timidly.

"Now I have found you again, after all these years, I shall not speedily part with you, depend upon it, Belinda," said Lady Catherine. "You and your husband must take up your quarters with us. We have plenty of room for you in this large hotel. Mr. Law, I am sure, will second my invitation."

"That I do, with all my heart," he rejoined. "You must come, Carrington. Neither Lady Catherine nor myself will take a refusal. My house, my servants, and my carriages shall be entirely at your disposal, and you shall do just as you please. I can't promise you much of my own company, for, as you may suppose, I am greatly occupied, but I will give you every moment I can spare. You, too, Sir Harry," he added to Archer, "must consider my house your home during your stay in Paris."

The invitation was far too agreeable to Belinda and her husband to be declined, and Lady Catherine and Law were proposing various plans for the amusement of their friends, when Thierry entered, and said that two gentlemen begged an interview with Mr. Law.

"I am unable to give their names," added Thierry, "but one of them says he is a Scottish kinsman of monseigneur."

"A Scottish kinsman, eh!—a cousin twenty times removed, in all probability," laughed Law. "Well, admit them."

Shortly afterwards, Thierry ushered in two personages, in the foremost of whom—a plainly-dressed gentleman of unassuming manner, and with features that proclaimed his Scottish origin—Law recognised the Earl of Islay.

"Ah! my dear lord!" exclaimed Law, stepping forward to greet him. "This is a most unexpected pleasure. I had not heard of your arrival in Paris."

"It is scarcely likely you could have done, sir," replied the earl, "for I have not been here many hours. Like all the rest of the world, I have come to pay my court to you. But allow me to present my friend, Lord Belhaven, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. His lordship is charged with a special mission to you," he added, as bows were exchanged between Law and the handsome and distinguished-looking nobleman in question.

"A mission from his royal highness, I presume," observed Law, with a smile. "I can guess its import. If I am not mistaken, the Prince of Wales desires to speculate in our funds. We have emissaries from every sovereign, and every potentate, in Europe, but it is clearly impossible to oblige them all."

"I will not affect for a moment to disguise the object of my mission to you, Mr. Law," replied Lord Belhaven. "As you have surmised, it does relate to the Compagnie des Indes, in which his royal highness is desirous of purchasing shares."

"I felt sure of it," thought Law. "I need scarcely say I shall feel proud to afford his royal highness all the facilities in my power. The present subscription is quite full, but the prince shall have some of my own shares, and on the next issue I shall be able to do better for him."

"Your compliance with his wishes will be duly appreciated by the prince, Mr. Law," said Lord Belhaven; "and you may rely upon it, he will not forget the obligation. I have some other matters to say to you, but these must be deferred to a more convenient opportunity."

The two noblemen were then presented to Lady Cathe-

rine, and while they were talking to her ladyship, Law asked Belinda if she had any curiosity to visit the Rue Quincampoix, informing her that the young king was going there privately on the following day, in company with the Regent.

"If you would like to go, Lady Catherine will take you," he added. "I shall be in attendance upon his youthful majesty, and may, perhaps, have an opportunity of presenting you to him. But that I cannot promise. I *will* promise, however, that you shall be in the same house with him."

"Oh! that will be delightful," cried Belinda. "I am dying to see the Rue Quincampoix. I am told it is the most extraordinary sight in Paris—that the crowds are wonderful—and it will be an additional gratification to see the young king. I hope Charlie and Sir Harry may be of the party."

"Of course," replied Law. "I don't mean to separate you from your husband, and Sir Harry is naturally included in the arrangement."

Hearing what was said, the Earl of Islay remarked that the temptation was so great that he would venture to ask Lady Catherine's permission to join her party.

"Oh! by all means," replied she, "and I trust Lord Belhaven will likewise favour us with his company."

"Nothing will give me greater pleasure," said his lordship, bowing. "I am as curious as all the rest of the world to see the famous Rue Quincampoix, and shall be delighted to go thither under such favourable circumstances."

Just then Thierry entered, to inform his master that the carriage was ready, whereupon, apologising to his friends for leaving them, and explaining that he had to attend a meeting of the directors of the Company at the Hôtel de Nevers, Law quitted the room.

As he descended to the vestibule, one of the Swiss porters informed him that a carriage with a lady inside it—"a middle-aged lady," said the Swiss—had been standing near the porte-cochère since an early hour in the morning.

"I have peremptorily refused the lady admittance," said the Swiss; "but she is there still. Her manner is so strange, that I think she cannot be in her right mind."

On hearing this, Law went to the gate. The Swiss porter's information proved correct. A handsome carriage, provided with a pair of fine horses, was standing at a little distance from the entrance of the hotel. Inside it was a lady, richly dressed, but with no pretension either to youth or beauty. Her features were quite unknown to Law. No sooner, however, did he show himself, than, being descried by the lady, she thrust her head and shoulders out of the carriage window, and screamed to the coachman,

"There is M. Law! Don't you see him? Do as I bade you, drôle!—quick!—quick!"

Upon this, to Law's infinite surprise and consternation, the coachman lashed his horses furiously, and driving the carriage against a high stone placed at the edge of the pavement near the entrance of the porte-cochère, instantly overturned the vehicle.

Law flew to the poor lady's assistance, and succeeded in extricating her from the carriage, which luckily had not sustained much damage, and was soon set right by the Swiss porters, who now rushed forth.

Meanwhile, after conveying the lady into the vestibule, and offering her a seat, Law inquired with much solicitude whether she had sustained any injury, upon which she replied that she was only a little shaken.

"To confess the truth, M. Law," she added, "I have tried in vain to obtain admittance to you, and so was obliged to have recourse to this stratagem. I hope you will pardon me, and let me have fifty shares."

"Well, madam," replied Law, laughing, "since you have incurred all this risk, you shall not go away empty-handed."

And taking out his porte-feuille, he gave her the shares she required.

VIII.

THE HÔTEL DE LOUISIANE.

Noon, and the Rue Quincampoix at its height.

From the iron grille at the Rue Aubry-le-Boûcher, where persons of quality were alone admitted, to the gate at the Rue-aux-Ours, where the commonalty entered, every inch of ground was occupied—the crowd, as usual, being composed of all ranks of society, mingled together without distinction.

An astounding hubbub prevailed, above which rose cries from brokers, jobbers, and hawkers that would have been perfectly unintelligible to any save the initiated. Récépissés, actions of all kinds, Mères, Filles, Petites Filles, Cinq Cents—all were offered, and all greedily purchased. Porte-feuilles stuffed with billets de banque were quickly emptied, and often as quickly replenished; but gold was in disfavour, and silver scornfully rejected. Generally the transactions were very noisily conducted, and much wrangling ensued, but all serious disputes were instantly checked.

In the balconies of several of the houses on either side of the narrow street sat well-dressed ladies, who appeared to take a lively interest in the proceedings of the tumultuous crowd below. Some of these ladies had little tablets in their hands, like modern betting-books, in which they entered bargains, and shares were handed to them by the Mississippians with whom they dealt, by means of a slit wand. Colporteurs were continually pushing through the crowd, holding up placards, and bawling out Monseigneur Law's last arrêt. All the bureaux swarmed with customers, and the demand for seats was so great that the lucky cobbler, who had fitted up his little shed as an office, obtained fifty livres for each of his chairs.

A novel, but as it turned out very lucrative, trade had been called into action by the exigencies of the Mis-

sissippians. A singular little hunchback, whose real name was Thibaut, but who was nicknamed Æsop, had made a good deal of money by selling pencils and pocket-books, when the idea occurred to him to turn his rounded shoulders to account, by offering them as a table to those who desired to note down their operations. At first the astute hunchback was content with a single livre for this accommodation, but he speedily raised his terms, and in the end realised 150,000 livres by the business. Little Æsop's success naturally excited rivalry, but the only person who could compete with him was an old soldier, named Martial, remarkable for the breadth of his omoplate.

All the cafés and other receptacles were thronged. In the Hôtel de Louisiane—as the principal tavern in the Rue Quincampoix was denominated—in a room on the rez-de-chaussée, the windows of which looked upon the street, on the morning in question sat three gaily-attired Mississippians. The remains of a déjeûner à la fourchette, served at the rate of three hundred livres a head, intermingled with three or four empty bottles of champagne and burgundy, lay before them on the table. They were now assisting digestion with fragrant coffee from the Ile de Bourbon, and if smoking had been in vogue as in our own days, no doubt each galliard would have had a cigar between his lips. The three Mississippians were the Comte de Horn, the Chevalier d'Etampes, and Captain de Mille.

"Corbleu! the Rue Quincampoix is a charming place," said De Mille. "Here we meet all the pretty women of Paris, and may accost a duchess just as familiarly as a fille de l'Opéra. That's its chief attraction with me."

"Baste!" exclaimed D'Etampes. "Say what you please, the chief attraction of the street with you, as with every one else who frequents it, is stock-jobbing. We are all become stock-jobbers, and, till I tasted this new pleasure, I didn't know what excitement really is."

"True," observed De Mille. "Stock-jobbing conducted in this manner, with pretty women for dealers, is my idea of Elysium. I hope it may last for ever. M.

Law is a great man—a very great man. We owe all this to him. He has created this wonderful street. He has brought all these people together. He has filled our pockets with money—trebled our means of enjoyment—given us all the luxuries we formerly sighed for in vain. M. Law, I repeat, is a very great man. May he live for ever, and go on perpetually issuing fresh shares!"

"And may we be here to buy them!" cried De Horn, laughing. "What a marvellous invention is paper-money. I'm astonished it was never found out before."

"I never thought I should live to despise gold," said D'Etampes; "but I now look with contempt upon a louis d'or."

"Keep your porte-feuille well stuffed with billets de banque—that's the plan," observed De Mille. "But, as De Horn truly observed, this paper-money is a wonderful invention, and its introduction proves M. Law to be a man of real genius. Why! it has made all Paris rich. And as to the Mississippians, their luxury is incredible. If they have the faculty of making money quickly, they also know how to spend it quickly. Talk of the Regent's suppers, they are all very well, but a real orgie can only be given by a Mississippian of the first water."

"If we make a million, as I feel sure we shall, we'll have an orgie worthy of Belshazzar," cried De Horn. "A propos of suppers, how did Cossard entertain you yesterday?"

"Superbly," replied De Mille. "You know he has bought a delicious maison de plaisance in the Rue de Charonne. The house is perfection—the vestibule painted by Watteau, and every room as exquisitely furnished as a salon in the Palais Royal. The supper was served on a table à ressort, which rose before us as we entered the banquet-chamber. Scented tapers lighted up the glittering plate and crystal glasses with which the board was loaded. The choicest flowers diffused their odours around. Never was there such a repast for luxury and prodigality. Every dish might have been ordered by Lucullus, and the wines were positive nectar. Strains of soft music proceeded

from an unseen orchestra, but did not interrupt the conversation. In short was the supper of a Sybarite, and nothing was wanting, except a little less restraint, but as M. Law and Lady Catherine were among the guests, the utmost decorum was observed.

"That would not have suited me," remarked De Horn. "I like the abandon of the Regent's suppers."

"I hope Cossard will soon give another entertainment, and invite me to it," remarked D'Etampes. "But all the Mississippians live like princes."

"Of what use is money save to purchase enjoyment?" said De Mille. "Thousands are now living in riot and prodigality who a few months ago had scarcely the means of existence. Marvellous are the changes wrought by the great enchanter at the head of affairs. By a single stroke of his wand he has turned a footman into a lord and a chambermaid into a fine lady. Lacqueys and coachmen now ride in their own carriages."

"Excusez, mon cher, they don't always ride *inside* them," interrupted D'Etampes, with a laugh. "It is true they have grand equipages, but they can't forget old habits, and not unfrequently mount the box or get up behind. A lady told me that on entering the parterre at the Opéra the other night, she met her cuisinière far more splendidly dressed than herself, and covered with diamonds."

"The freaks and follies of these newly-enriched common folks are ridiculous in the highest degree," laughed De Horn. "Not knowing what to do with their money, they play at ducks and drakes with it. But let us go out and transact a little business. I must go to our broker, Papillon. I've got some cinq cents to sell. Won't you come, De Mille?"

"I'll join you presently," he replied. "I expect Cossard, and must wait for him."

De Horn and D'Etampes then quitted the room, leaving De Mille alone. Shortly afterwards, Cossard made his appearance, and said, hurriedly,

"Now is the time for the execution of our project.

Evelyn Harcourt will be here presently. He has got fifty *mères* to sell. Each share is worth twelve thousand livres, but I have so managed the market that they have fallen to three thousand. Buy his shares at that price, and pay him with *filles*."

"Good. How many *filles* must I give him?"

"Twenty," replied Cossard. "Leave the rest to me."

At this moment Evelyn appeared at the open window, and, on seeing him, De Mille called out:

"Bonjour, M. Harcourt. Can we do any business together to-day?"

"Will you buy any actions d'Occident?" responded Evelyn. "I have fifty to sell."

"They have fallen a fourth, but I will give you twenty *filles* for them," said De Mille. "Pray come in."

Evelyn complied, and after a little bargaining the exchange was made. Scarcely was it concluded than loud shouts were heard in the street announcing a change of some kind.

"What has happened, M. Fagon?" asked Cossard of a man who was standing at the window.

"The *filles* have gone down," replied this individual, who was Cossard's secret agent. "The market has been suddenly inundated with them."

"How much have they fallen?" demanded Cossard.

"Two-thirds," replied Fagon, "and they are likely to fall still lower."

"I will give you ten *petites filles* for your twenty *filles*, M. Harcourt," said De Mille.

"That is too much, you ought only to give seven," observed Cossard.

"No matter—shall we deal, sir?" said De Mille, taking the shares from his pocket-book.

Evelyn assented, and a fresh exchange was made.

"The fluctuations in the market are unaccountable to-day," remarked Cossard. "I never knew anything like it. Sacrebleu! what's that?" he cried, as another great disturbance was heard in the street.

"The *filles* are down now—one half," replied Fagon.

"But the *mères* have risen prodigiously," he added. "They are now at twelve thousand livres."

"I can't comprehend why they have so suddenly got into favour again," said Cossard.

At this moment the Comte de Horn and D'Etampes rushed into the room in a state of great excitement.

"Everything is falling!" cried De Horn. "We shall all be ruined. The *cinq cents* are down—and so are the *filles* and the *petites filles*."

"But the *mères* are up," said Cossard.

"True," replied De Horn; "but, unluckily, mine are gone."

"So are mine," said Evelyn. "I have just sold fifty to Captain de Mille."

"You shall have ten of them back again for twenty *cinq cents*," said De Mille.

"Agreed," cried Evelyn, handing him the twenty shares, and receiving ten others in return.

While De Horn was declaiming against the stock-jobbers, to whose discreditable manœuvres he attributed the extraordinary changes that had just occurred, Fagon called out,

"Another change, messieurs!"

"What now?" demanded Cossard.

"The *mères* are declining again, and the *cinq cents*, the *filles*, and the *petites filles* are rising."

"Diable!" cried Cossard. "You are unlucky to-day, M. Harcourt."

At this moment, the attention of all the party in the room was attracted by a brawl in the street, and rushing to the open window to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, they found that a conflict was taking place between two richly-dressed individuals, who were defending themselves with their canes against half a dozen assailants, some of whom had drawn their swords. Such was the quickness and dexterity of the two persons in question, who were evidently adepts at single-stick—a mode of fighting little practised at that time in Paris—that they not only managed to keep off their assailants,

but, by well-applied blows on the arm, compelled three or four of them to drop their blades. From the wild shouts and peculiar mode of fighting of the two principal personages in this unequal conflict, Evelyn knew they must be Irishmen, and feeling sure they would be speedily worsted, he shouted out to them to seek refuge in the tavern.

The Irishmen acted at once upon the hint. Clearing off their nearest opponents by some well-directed blows, they rushed towards the open window of the tavern, and sprang actively through it. In another moment the window was beset by a furious crowd, all loudly demanding that the fugitives should be given up to them, while several of them tried to get in at the window. Evelyn, however, with the Comte de Horn and the others, resisted their entrance, and luckily at this moment half a dozen archers came up, and quelled the disturbance.

IX.

ROOKS AND PIGEONS

PEACE being thus restored, the two Irishmen, who had retired to the back of the room, came forward, and made their best bows to the company, but in such a grotesque style as to excite the laughter of all those who beheld them.

"Who the deuce are these originals?" asked De Mille of Evelyn. "They appear to be countrymen of yours."

"I have no sort of acquaintance with them," replied Evelyn. "They look like parvenus. May I venture to ask your names, gentlemen?" he added to the Irishmen. "If I am not mistaken, you are both from the Sister Isle?"

"Yer hon'r is right," replied Sir Terence. "This jontleman is Sir Patrick Molloy, and I am Sir Terence O'Flaherty, at yer hon'r's sarvice. Mighty glad we are to meet wid a fellow-countryman on an occasion like the present, and greatly obleeged we are to yer hon'r, as well as to the rest of the hon'r'ble company, for affordin' us an asylum. If we might make so bould, we should be delighted to prove our gratitude by trating the company to a glass of wine."

Evelyn having communicated Sir Terence's wishes to the others, De Mille at once called out,

"Accept his offer by all means. Something may be done with these fools," he added, in an under tone, to De Horn.

"You think so?" said De Horn.

"I'm sure of it," replied the other. And, going to the door, he opened it, and called out, "Hola, mon hôte! —Rossignol, I say!"

"Voilà, messieurs, voilà," replied the cabaretier, instantly making his appearance.

"Here is the host," observed Evelyn to Sir Terence. "What orders do you desire to give him?"

"Bid him bring half a dozen of the best wine his house can furnish," replied the Irishman.

This order being conveyed to Rossignol, he observed,

"Is the gentleman aware that the best vin de Bordeaux costs fifty livres a bottle?"

On this being made known to Sir Terence, he called out, angrily,

"Wot's that he says?—fifty livres a bottle! By the powers! it ought to be good at the price. But what d'ye stand starin' at, ye ugly spalpeen?" he added to Rossignol, who of course did not comprehend a word he said. "Be off, and fetch the wine. Divil take you! do you think I can't pay for it?" But finding that the host did not move, he produced a bulky porte-feuille, from which he took a note, calling out, as he flourished it before Rossignol's eyes, "Here's a billy for five thousand livres. Will that pay you?"

"A l'instant, monsieur—à l'instant!" cried the host, disappearing.

"I thought the rascal would understand what this meant," observed Sir Terence, with a laugh, as he replaced the note in his porte-feuille.

"Bedad! I hope I haven't lost my pocket-book in the scrimmage," cried Sir Patrick. "No, it's here safe enough," he added, taking it out and examining it.

"Both these boobies have well-filled porte-feuilles," remarked De Mille to the Comte de Horn. "We must contrive to empty them."

"Sur ma foi, fortune seems to have thrown them in our way," rejoined De Horn, in the same tone. "What a pity it is they can't speak French."

"Oh, they can talk well enough for our purpose," said De Mille. "Besides, M. Harcourt will act as interpreter."

"With so much money about you as you appear to have, gentlemen," observed Evelyn to the two Irishmen, "you ought to avoid getting into brawls. There are plenty of cut-purses in the crowd, and it is well you have not got your pockets picked."

"By the powers! we must be more careful in future," said Sir Terence. "Divil a bit did we mane to git into a row at all, but was goin' about like paiceable folk, meddlin' wi' no man, when our English broker comes up to us, and, says he, 'I'll bring you to a customer who'll sell you some shares.' So we pushes our way through the crowd, until we comes right opposite to this tavern, and there, sure enough, we finds our customer standin' beside the little hunchback — Teebow they calls him, though he ain't much of a beau—who lets out his hump as a writin'-desk to the Mississippians. Well, a bargain was struck, and our broker was jist makin' a note of the transaction on little Teebow's back, when up comes two or three tall swaggerin' fellows, and without sayin' by ver lave, knocks him and the dwarf over togither. This makes the saucy blades laugh heartily, but Pat and I soon stop their fun, for quick as lightnin' we

brings down our sticks on their showlders—whack!—whack! 'How d'ye like it?' says I, givin' the fellow nearest me a smart crack on the crown. 'That'll tache ye manners next time.' Well, he didn't seem to like it at all, but grinned like a bah-boon, and began to saacre and swear like a trooper. So I gives him another gentle tap on the sconce, but instead of pacifyin' him, it makes him swear like ten thousand divils just let loose. Out flies his toastin'-fork, and he would have spitted me in a trice if I hadn't bin too sharp for him, and made him drop his weep'n. Jist then Sir Patrick roars out for help, and, turnin' round, I finds him hard pressed by three or four ruffians. 'Och, murder, my jewel!' cries I, 'I'll be with you in a jiffy.' So I lays about me right and left like a thrasher, and soon clears a way to Sir Patrick; and then we stands back to back, and bids defiance to the whole host ov 'em. However, with sich odds against us we must soon have got the worst ov it, if we hadn't found shelter here—thanks be to yer hon'r and the noble company. Ah, here comes the wine."

As he spoke, Rossignol made his appearance, followed by a garçon bearing the wine.

The table was then quickly cleared by the active host and his equally active attendant of the empty flasks and the débris of the déjeûner. Fresh glasses were brought, and a couple of corks drawn. The wine was then tasted by Sir Terence, who smacked his lips over it and pronounced it excellent, and he then proceeded to fill to the brim all the glasses of the company, bowing to each as he fulfilled his task. After raising the glass to his lips, but without drinking a drop, Cossard rose, and, apologising for retiring, quitted the room. Evelyn was about to follow his example, but De Mille begged him to stay a few moments, saying,

"If you leave us, M. Harcourt, we shan't be able to converse with our new friends."

The Irishmen also besought him so earnestly to remain, that he could not refuse compliance. However, not all the entreaties of Sir Terence could induce him to

empty his glass. De Mille and the others, who were of far less temperate habits, showed no such reluctance, but drank as freely as the Irishmen themselves, and, in a very short space of time, four out of the six bottles were emptied. Conversation was carried on between the Irishmen and the others through the medium of Evelyn, who good naturedly consented to act as interpreter, and as the generous wine loosened the tongue of Sir Terence, who was the chief speaker, he became more and more communicative, detailed the interview which he and Sir Patrick had had with the great Mr. Law, boasted of their gilt coach and footmen, and invited all the company to visit them at the Hôtel de la Régence, in the Rue Saint Honoré.

"Be good nough to tell the gentlemen, M. Harcourt," said De Mille, glancing, as he spoke, expressively at the two Irishmen, "that the Comte de Horn, the Chevalier d'Etampes, and myself, Captain de Mille, are enchanted to make their acquaintance—say 'enchanted,' if you please, M. Harcourt. Add, that we shall do ourselves the honour of calling upon them at their hotel, and shall always be delighted—pray say 'delighted,' M. Harcourt—to see them at the Hôtel de Flandre. Do not omit to say that we are infinitely obliged—'infinitely,' if you please, M. Harcourt—by their proposal to lend us their carriage, and we shall not hesitate to avail ourselves of their polite offer."

When this was conveyed to the two Irishmen by Evelyn, they both arose and bowed with ludicrous ceremoniousness to De Mille and the others, who, in order to humour the jest, rose likewise, and bowed with mock formality in return.

"I am ashamed to put you to so much trouble, M. Harcourt," said De Mille, apologetically, "but my disgraceful ignorance of your language leaves me no alternative. We all come to the Rue Quincampoix with one object, namely, to buy or sell shares. Will you ask our new friends whether they are disposed to sell or buy? I can meet them in either way."

This question being put by Evelyn, Sir Terence immediately replied,

"Bedad, I'm always ready for bis'ness. Ask the capt'n if he has any 'daughters' and 'granddaughters' for sale."

Whereunto, on the question being propounded to him, De Mille replied that he had ten *filles* and twice as many *petites filles*, for each of which he expected ten thousand livres.

"Jist the sort ov fam'ly I should like to possess. I'll take 'em at the price," replied Sir Terence, producing his big pocket-book, and counting out thirty billets de banque, each worth ten thousand livres. "But all these girls ought to have a 'mother' to take care of them," he added, with a laugh. "Has the capt'n got one? And, if so, wot's her valley?"

De Mille replied that he had a "mother"—more than one, indeed—as many as ten—but he could not part with them under twelve thousand livres—with a premium.

"The owld ladies stands higher in the market than their daughters, since they commands a premium," observed Sir Terence. "They're too dear for me."

"I'll take 'em, capt'n," said Sir Patrick, bringing out his pocket-book, "and as many more as you like to sell."

As soon as this little transaction was concluded, a fresh bottle of wine was opened, and all the glasses, except Evelyn's, replenished.

"Permit me, jontlemen, to propose a toast," said Sir Terence, getting up, glass in hand. "As Sir Patrick and myself owes our fortins to Mr. Law, we ought not to omit drinkin' his very good health on an occasion like the present. Here's Mr. Law! and long life to him!" he added, draining his glass to the last drop.

"Mr. Law, and long life to him!" cried Sir Patrick, following his example.

"A la santé de Monseigneur Law!" cried the others, enthusiastically.

"I cannot refuse that toast," said Evelyn, filling his glass. "Long live Mr. Law! and may he long occupy

the proud position he has attained!" And he added, "Are you aware, gentlemen, that he is about to visit the Rue Quincampoix to-day?"

"You don't say so?" exclaimed De Mille. "I have heard nothing about it. At what hour is he likely to be here?"

"That I cannot inform you," replied Evelyn. "I have heard, on pretty good authority, that the young king and the Regent are likewise coming here to-day, and if so, Mr. Law will naturally be in attendance upon his majesty."

"Are you sure you are correctly informed, sir?" remarked the Comte de Horn. "I supped with the Regent last night at the Palais Royal, and nothing was said about this royal visit."

"I believe my information will prove to be correct, M. le Comte, though I am not at liberty to mention the source from which I obtained it," replied Evelyn. "No public intimation has been given of the intended royal visit, and for this reason—his youthful majesty desires to see the street as it is—thronged with Mississippians. All its peculiar features would be lost if business were interrupted."

"Very true," observed De Horn; "the Rue Quincampoix would be like any other crowded street if it wanted its extraordinary bustle and animation. But I don't think that even the young king's presence would stop the stock-jobbing, when at its height. What say you, De Mille?"

"I am quite of your opinion," replied the person appealed to. "Men won't throw away the chance of making a million for the pleasure of looking at a boy-monarch. He comes to see *them*—they have something better to do than to waste their time in staring at him."

"If his youthful majesty should see the crowd in a state of excitement," remarked D'Etampes, "he will fancy all his subjects are gone mad."

"And he won't be far out if he does think so," said Evelyn, with a laugh.

"Well, we are all as mad as the rest," cried De Mille;

"and for my part, I have no wish to regain my senses. But will you do me the favour to ask our new friends if they would like a game at quadrille, a party at piquet, or a little hazard? Hola! Rossignol!" he shouted. "Cards and dice, dy'e hear!"

"De suite, monsieur, de suite!" responded the host; and he presently appeared with half a dozen packs of cards and a couple of dice-boxes, which he placed on the table beside De Mille.

"Will you play, gentlemen?" cried De Mille. "Shall it be this?—or this?" he added, suiting the action to the word, and alternately touching the cards and dice-boxes.

As the invitation could not be misunderstood, Sir Terence immediately arose, and taking up a pack of cards, said, "This."

"Very good," replied De Mille, with a smile. "The language of gaming is fortunately intelligible to all the world. Shall we play piquet?"

"Piquet, by all manes, capt'n," replied Sir Terence, pleased with his own cleverness. "We both ov us understands that game, havin' often played it at the Cheerman's Club at the Blue Posts."

"I advise you not to play now," said Evelyn. "If you do, you'll lose your money. You are no match for these gentlemen."

"Poh! poh! we're not sich greenhorns as that, are we, Sir Patrick?" cried Sir Terence. "Now that we belongs to the quality, we must do as the quality does."

"Tell the gentlemen we play for nothing under five thousand livres," said De Mille to Harcourt.

"What was that observation about livres?" inquired Sir Terence.

Evelyn told him, and added, "I must repeat my caution to you."

But Sir Terence only laughed, and said, "Oh! we're not afeared. We like a little gamblin'. Hitherto we've had good luck, but if it should desert us, we shan't feel the loss of a few thousand livres—eh, Sir Patrick?"

"Not we," replied the personage addressed, bringing

out his porte-feuille, the sight of which excited the cupidity of De Mille and his companions, and they resolved to empty it before they parted with him. "We can easily make up our losses before we laves the street."

"Again, I say be upon your guard," remarked Evelyn to the Irishmen. "I more than suspect the persons you are about to play with are rooks."

"Rooks did you say?" cried Sir Terence. "Then iv they takes us for pigeons, they'll find us deuced hard to pluck. Sir Patrick and I are both wide awake, and can see as far into a millstone as most folk, so we shall be up to their tricks."

"Ay, and down upon 'em, too, if they attempt any foul play," said Sir Patrick.

"If you're wise, you'll come with me," said Evelyn, preparing to depart.

"Won't you stay and take a hand with us, M. Harcourt?" said De Mille, who was engaged in removing all the deuces, trays, fours and fives from a pack of cards, preparatory to commencing the game.

"I never play," replied Evelyn.

"Never play! You surprise me," cried De Mille. "Then you don't know the greatest pleasure in life."

"Always excepting stock-jobbing, which I hold to be more exciting than cards," said De Horn.

"Stock-jobbing *is* gambling," said De Mille. "So M. Harcourt is wrong in asserting that he never plays."

"At all events, I never meddle with cards and dice," said Evelyn.

"Well, stop a few minutes, I beg of you, if only to explain matters to your countrymen," observed De Mille. "We should be sorry to take any advantage of them."

"I can be of no further assistance," said Evelyn. "So I must leave them in your hands."

"And be assured we'll take every care of them," said De Horn.

"I don't doubt it," replied Evelyn.

And with a warning look at the Irishmen, which, however, was quite lost upon them, he quitted the room

X.

A FEW GROUPS IN THE RUE QUINCAMPOIX.

A STEP from the tavern into the crowded street was like a plunge into a torrent. Finding it in vain to struggle against the stream, which was now flowing towards the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, Evelyn suffered himself to be borne in that direction. Before long, however, a check was experienced, and all circulation was for a short time impeded. With some difficulty, Evelyn managed to extricate himself from the throng, and sought refuge in the open doorway of a house, from which position he was able to survey the tumultuous scene.

An extraordinary sight it was, and though Evelyn had often witnessed it before, it had still as much interest for him as ever. The crowd in the Rue Quincampoix was like no other crowd. Never before had such a motley assemblage been brought together—nor ever will be again. Such was the variety of costumes and characters that the scene resembled a grand carnival, except that the majority of the actors came for purposes of speculation, and not for amusement.

Where, but in the Rue Quincampoix, could have been seen nobles and manants, priests and valets, magistrates, philosophers, and chevaliers d'industrie, bargaining together? Where, but in this street could be seen richly-attired women of high rank, and of great beauty, mingling with such a crowd, and transacting business with any one they met? Nothing but the frenzy for gain which had seized persons of all classes could account for such proceedings. The wonderful fortunes known to have been made in the Rue Quincampoix caused every one to rush there, hoping to be equally lucky. Business was universally neglected. Nothing was thought of but stock-jobbing. Nothing talked of but the price of actions—how they rose—how they fell. Even in our speculating times

it is scarcely possible to form a notion of the frenzy which then prevailed—which spread like a contagion through Paris—through all the provinces of France, and, indeed, throughout Europe. In a satirical carol of the day we read of

Les plaisans viremens
Et continuels changemens
Que l'on a vu dans le royaume
De Quincampoix et de Vendôme,
Ou l'achat et le dividend
Causoient un rumeur si grande,
Qu'on ne vit jamais tant de rats
Obséder gens de tous états ;
Mari, femme, garçon, et fille,
Laquais, servantes, la famille
En un mot, sans rien excepter,
Venit jouer et blanquetter.
Là de tous pays et provinces,
Marchands, magistrats, artisans,
Prélats, guerriers, et courtisans,
Ducs et pairs, même des princes,
Non du pays, mais bien forains,
Accouroient comme des essaims,
Malgré vent, grêle, pluie, et crotte,
Pour y jouer à la marotte,
En beaux et bons deniers comptans,
Contre les voleurs calotines,
Dont la France et terres voisines
Se pourront souvenir long temps.

We may judge of the frenzy that prevailed, when we see that it made the haughtiest aristocrats lose all respect for themselves, and that while under the influence of this fever they stooped to practices from which in calmer moments they would have revolted. But if we censure princes, peers, and other exalted personages for conduct so unworthy of their station, what shall we say of noble dames who could so far forget themselves as to figure in such a scene? Yet, as we have shown, women of the highest rank constantly frequented the Rue Quincampoix, and were amongst the most eager jobbers. Utterly disregarding the construction that might be put upon their conduct, heedless of the annoyances and inconveniences to which they were subjected, equally heedless of the fa-

miliarity with which they were treated, without a blush at the ribaldry and licentious discourse that constantly met their ears, they went on through the throng, carrying on their speculations whenever a chance offered. It was noticeable that these high-born dames, and, indeed, ladies generally, declined to deal with each other, and invariably carried on their transactions with those of the opposite sex, no matter of what rank—lacquey, artisan peasant, petit maître, or peer—over whom they deemed their charms might give them an advantage.

From the position which he had just gained, Evelyn looked around on this strange scene. Everybody seemed in a state of the wildest excitement. A sudden rise had taken place, and buyers and sellers were equally clamorous. The din was prodigious, almost bewildering, and would have stunned any one unaccustomed to it. But those who were in the thickest of the crowd, and engaged in the uproar, knew very well what was said. Transactions for large sums were carried on with astonishing rapidity. *Mères*, *filles*, and *petites filles*, were dealt out with one hand, and billets de banque received with the other. The countenances of those engaged in these rapidly-conducted operations were a study, and could they have been seized at the moment, would have formed an unequalled picture.

As he ran his eye rapidly over the throng, several groups attracted Evelyn's attention. One was composed of a lady richly dressed, and evidently of rare personal attractions, though her features were partially concealed by a half mask of black velvet. She was buying actions from two brokers, for which she paid a considerable sum in billets de banque, and in the excitement of the transaction her mask fell off, and disclosed the dark eyes, dark tresses, and charming countenance of the Regent's *petit corbeau noir*, the Comtesse de Parabère. The mask was quickly replaced, and the countess disappeared as speedily as she could.

The next lady upon whom our observer's eye rested was a person of very inferior condition, and with but little pretension to personal attraction, though she, too

was very richly dressed. As she wore no mask, Evelyn, to whom she had been previously pointed out, and who was acquainted with her history, instantly recognised her as Madame Chaumont, a widow who had come to Paris about a lawsuit, and who had already gained a hundred millions by her speculations in this street. She was surrounded by Mississippians, with all of whom she appeared to be dealing.

Not far from the lucky Madame Chaumont stood the Prince de Conti, who was now as regularly to be seen in the Rue Quincampoix as any other jobber. At this moment the prince was selling shares to a stout, well-looking man, whose countenance, though he could not recal it, was familiar to Evelyn. This stout personage was no other than Law's ci-devant coachman, Hippolyte.

The next person to attract Evelyn's notice was M. Chirac, the Regent's principal physician, a man ordinarily of grave exterior and extremely dignified deportment, but he now appeared to be in a state of great excitement, and was gesticulating furiously to M. Chambéry, a speculator with whom he was dealing. Like Madame Chaumont, Chambéry was a singular instance of the caprice of fortune. A poor Savoyard, he gained a bare livelihood by acting as a commissioner, but since the commencement of the System he had contrived to amass forty millions, and at this particular juncture he was endeavouring to purchase an office in the royal household.

Close to Chambéry, and now availing himself of the broad omoplate of Martial to jot down his calculations, was Vincent Leblanc, another speculator, who had profited to the extent of many millions by the System. The two persons with whom Leblanc was now transacting business were no other than Montesquieu and Fontenelle. These two celebrated men were kept in countenance by a pair of the ripest scholars of the day—namely, the Abbé Terrason and M. de la Mothe.

Many other remarkable personages came under Evelyn's ken. Among the throng he recognised three of the Regent's Roués, De Broglie, Brancas, and Nocé, and in

the balcony of a house on the opposite side of the street he discovered the Duchesse de Brissac, the beautiful Marquise de Bellefonds, Madame de Blanchefort, and Mademoiselles d'Espinoy and De Melun. In fact, almost every window in this part of the street was garnished with charming court dames. The ladies, as we have previously intimated, were by no means indifferent spectatresses of the scene, but took a prominent part in the extraordinary drama going on, being constantly engaged in speculations with the Mississippians and brokers in the street.

A striking feature in the crowd was the number of richly-dressed persons, and these were by no means people of the highest rank, for those who made money invariably expended it in costly stuffs, and clothed themselves in embroidered velvets and silks, and even in cloth of gold, wearing buttons of solid gold and silver. This extravagance was carried to such a point that all the warehouses in the Rue St. Honoré were emptied of their stores of silks, velvets, tissues, lace, and embroidery, and it was found necessary to check the over-indulgence in rich stuffs by a sumptuary law.

On the present occasion a laughable incident occurred. A Mississippian of the lower order, but who was arrayed in a blue velvet coat bedizened with gold lace, and furnished with buttons of solid gold, deliberately took it off, and gave it to a broker with whom he was bargaining to make up the amount of a share. But he undertook to redeem the pledge within five minutes, and so expeditiously were operations conducted, that he got back his coat within the given time.

Strange indeed was the manner in which the transactions were conducted. The brokers refused nothing but specie. A young, beautiful, and richly-dressed woman, having no other means of obtaining the shares she coveted, gave all her jewels to a broker. One man paid for a few shares with his title-deeds, and deemed himself singularly fortunate. Another offered a mortgage deed, and a third bills of exchange. Mistakes were occasionally made, and a priest in his hurry to conclude a bargain handed over a billet d'enterrement instead of a billet de banque.

Laughable encounters constantly took place. Husbands, who thought their wives safe at home, discovered them in the crowd; servants, who ought to have been engaged in their household duties, stumbled upon their masters or mistresses; clerks confronted their employers; and debtors could not avoid their creditors.

But these encounters, and many others of a similar nature, rarely led to unpleasant consequences. People were too much engrossed by the business they came upon to squabble. Thus the husband passed on without stopping to upbraid his wife; the clerk escaped unquestioned; and the servant was excused. Amongst the crowd Evelyn descried several persons who had profited enormously by the System—to wit, old Samuel Bernard, the banker; Antoine Crozat, of whom mention has been previously made; M. Fargès, originally a common soldier, and now worth twenty millions; the Sieur André, who had made sixty millions; and Messieurs Le Blanc and De la Faye, each of whom had made eighteen millions.

Evelyn had just completed his survey of the various groups we have described, when a tall, stately-looking valet, in a rich livery, made his way towards him. It was Thierry.

"Lady Catherine Law is in the house on the other side of the street, immediately opposite to where you stand, sir," said Thierry, "and having observed you among the crowd, she has sent me to say she will be glad to see you. I may add," he continued, in a low tone, "that his majesty is expected in a few minutes. If it will please you to follow me I will conduct you to her ladyship."

It is scarcely necessary to say that Evelyn gladly accepted the invitation, and was soon across the street with his conductor.

XI.

OF THE OVATION RECEIVED BY LAW.

The house to which he was taken was the largest in the Rue Quincampoix, and was not without some pretensions to architectural beauty. It stood back a little from the street, and possessed handsome windows and elaborately-wrought iron balconies.

The door was guarded by soldiers, but at a word from Thierry they allowed Evelyn to pass, and he entered the house with his conductor.

The guard at the door proving conclusively that some persons of importance must be inside the house which Evelyn had just entered, the general gaze was directed towards the windows, but for some time the public curiosity remained ungratified.

At length, a party of richly-dressed ladies appeared at the upper windows, and some of them, in order to obtain a better view of the street, came forward into the balconies. Among the foremost of these was Lady Catherine Law, who, being recognised by the assemblage, was enthusiastically cheered. With Lady Catherine, besides her children, were Colombe and Belinda.

It being now certain that Law must be in the house, loud shouts were raised for him by the crowd, but, as he did not respond to the calls, they increased in vehemence, until the whole street became in an uproar. The cries were so loud and persistent, that at length Law yielded, and stepped forth upon the balcony on the first floor, which had hitherto remained unoccupied, and bowed to the assemblage.

On his appearance the most frantic demonstrations of enthusiasm and delight were made, and the tremendous shout which arose was carried along to either extremity of the Rue Quincampoix, and was caught up by the crowds in all the adjacent streets.

It being evident from Law's manner that he desired to address the assemblage, silence was at length obtained, and in a brief speech, which, being uttered in a clear and sonorous voice, was heard to a considerable distance, he thanked them for the gratifying reception they had given him, assuring them it was ample reward for all his exertions to improve the finances of the kingdom, and extend its commerce.

"My aim," he said, in conclusion, "has been to relieve the state from debt, to free the people from vexatious imposts, and to render trade flourishing, and I am proud to think I have succeeded."

"You have!—you have!" cried a thousand voices. "You are the preserver of the country—the benefactor of the people. We are indebted to you, and to you alone, for our present prosperity. You have made us all rich and happy. Poverty and misery are no longer known in France. Vive Monseigneur Law!"

Never before had Law experienced such emotions as now swelled within his breast. Fully believing that he had conferred incalculable benefits upon the country, believing also that his System would endure, he accepted the homage paid him as if his due, and exulted in his triumph.

His appearance at that moment excited universal admiration. His lofty and imposing figure, his strikingly handsome lineaments, his dignified deportment—all contributed to the effect he produced. So wonderful was the enthusiasm of the assemblage, that it seemed as if they would never leave off shouting. Law bowed to them repeatedly, and whenever he did so the acclamations were renewed.

"Messieurs!" he said, as soon as the vociferations had in some degree subsided, "you have already bestowed more praise upon me than I deserve. Your cheers must now be addressed to one to whom they are rightfully due. To arouse the spirit of loyalty which I am certain burns in every breast, I have only to mention that your young king is present."

No sooner was this announcement made than fresh acclamations arose, and shouts resounded on all sides of "Vive le Roi."

In the midst of these loyal demonstrations Law bowed and withdrew, and presently afterwards, in compliance with the wishes of his subjects, the young king came out upon the balcony. His habiliments, of light blue satin, set off his graceful figure to the utmost advantage. He was attended by the Regent and the Duc de Bourbon, and behind him stood the Maréchal de Villeroi and Law.

The young monarch's appearance was the signal for fresh demonstrations of loyalty and devotion; but the enthusiasm of the assemblage was roused to the highest pitch when Law was called forward by the king, who addressed a few words to him, the import of which could easily be conjectured by those who witnessed the scene.

But if any doubt could have remained, it was dispelled by the Regent, who called out with a loud voice,

"Messieurs! his majesty desires publicly to thank M. Law for the important services he has rendered to the state and to the country at large!"

On this, the plaudits were louder than ever, and the whole place resounded with shouts of "Vivent le Roi et Monseigneur Law!"

XII.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN THE YOUNG KING AND MADEMOISELLE LAW.

BOWING graciously to the assemblage, and giving his hand to his uncle, who stood close behind him, the young monarch withdrew from the balcony.

"I hope your majesty does not regret the visit you have paid to the Rue Quincampoix?" observed the Regent, as he conducted his royal nephew to a fauteuil.

"On the contrary, I have been greatly interested by all I have seen and heard," replied Louis. "Until this moment I had no conception how very highly M. Law is esteemed by the people. What can be done to mark our sense of the services he has rendered to the kingdom?"

"I would recommend your majesty to begin by placing the entire administration of the finances in his hands," returned the Regent.

"I wish to do so," said Louis. "But I understand from the Maréchal de Villeroi that he is disqualified from holding the office of comptroller-general."

"The disqualifications may be removed, sire," returned the Regent. "I trust M. Law may be induced by the arguments of the Abbé Tencin, who has undertaken the task of his conversion, to renounce his heretical doctrines and embrace the faith of Rome. If so, the main difficulty will be obviated, since his naturalisation will follow as a matter of course."

"Your majesty will do well to reflect before promising the appointment," said Villeroi in the king's ear. "Wait to see how the System goes on."

"I am perfectly satisfied with what it has done already," replied Louis. "I hope the Abbé Tencin will fulfil his godly task, mon oncle," he added to the Regent. "In that case, M. Law shall have the post."

"I ought to inform your majesty," said the Regent, "that Lady Catherine Law, with her son and daughter,

are in an upper room of this house. Will it please you to receive them?"

Louis graciously assented, and on being acquainted with his majesty's pleasure, Law quitted the room, and presently returned with Lady Catherine and his children, all of whom were presented by the Regent, and received with the greatest affability by the young king. To Lady Catherine, Louis spoke of the ovation her husband had just received from the public. To Mademoiselle Law he addressed some compliments which she could not fail to appreciate. And he gratified young John Law immensely by telling him he was the very image of his father.

"Pray stay a moment, mademoiselle," he added to Kate Law, who was about to retire. "I want to say a word to you about my ball. I hope you like dancing?"

"I am passionately fond of it, sire," she replied.

"I fancied so," he said. "We will dance a minuet together—unless you prefer any other figure."

"The minuet is my favourite dance, sire," replied Kate.

"I am glad to hear it," said Louis, smiling. "But I am arranging a little ballet in which you and your brother must take part."

"Excuse me, sire, for reminding you that the ballet is already filled up," remarked Villeroi.

"Who has filled it up?" demanded Louis, noticing Kate's look of disappointment.

"I have, sire," replied the maréchal, "with young persons qualified by their rank to dance with your majesty."

"You have taken too much upon yourself, M. le Maréchal, in making this arrangement without my sanction," said Louis, "and you will have to undo your work. Two of those whom you have selected must be left out, and their places assigned to Mademoiselle Law and her brother."

"I hope your majesty will not insist upon this," remonstrated Villeroi. "It will embarrass me greatly."

"I cannot help that," said Louis.

"Oh! pray, sire, do not let the arrangements be disturbed on my account!" said Kate. "It will be quite sufficient gratification to me to witness the ballet, without taking part in it."

"But you *shall* dance in it, mademoiselle, and so shall your brother," said Louis. "M. le Maréchal, you will take care that my injunctions are obeyed. Is there anything more that can be done to render the ball agreeable to you, mademoiselle?" he added to Kate.

"Oh! sire, you are too considerate," she cried.

"Not at all, mademoiselle," he rejoined. "As the daughter of one who has rendered such important services to the kingdom, you are entitled to every consideration from me. Is there any one whom you desire to have invited to the ball?"

"Can this be the great-grandson of the Grand Monarque?" mentally ejaculated Villeroi, with a groan.

"Your majesty emboldens me to mention that I have one friend whom I love as a sister—Mademoiselle Colombe Laborde—and it would indeed gratify me if she were honoured with an invitation."

"She shall have one," returned Louis. "Mark what I say, M. le Maréchal. Mademoiselle Colombe Laborde is to be invited."

"It shall be done, sire," groaned Villeroi.

"Mademoiselle Laborde is a very charming person," observed the Regent. "But your majesty may judge of her yourself; for, unless I am mistaken, she is with Lady Catherine's party in the upper room. Shall she be presented?"

"By all means," replied Louis; "and let the whole of Lady Catherine Law's party be introduced at the same time."

This order being communicated by the Regent to a gentleman in waiting at the door, it was at once carried into effect, and shortly afterwards Belinda and her husband, Sir Harry Archer, the Earl of Islay, Lord Belhaven, Evelyn Harcourt, and Mademoiselle Laborde, were severally announced, and presented to the young

king, by whom they were all very graciously received. Louis was particularly struck by Colombe, and told Kate he was much indebted to her for enabling him to have so charming a person at his ball.

The presentations being made without the usual form and ceremony, there was no restraint, and everybody was delighted with the affability displayed by the young king.

When Evelyn came up to make his obeisance to the youthful monarch, the Regent remarked to his royal nephew, "Sire, I am about to ask a favour of you."

"You can ask nothing that I will refuse, mon oncle," replied Louis, smiling. "What is it?"

"You have invited this young lady"—pointing to Colombe—"to please Mademoiselle Law. Invite this young gentleman"—indicating Evelyn—"to please me."

"With all my heart," rejoined the king. "Take care M. Harcourt is invited," he added to Villeroi.

"Your majesty had better invite all the company," said the old maréchal, unable to repress his vexation.

"An excellent suggestion!" exclaimed the Regent. "They are all M. Law's friends."

"And as such they are welcome to me," said Louis. "I am obliged by the hint, M. le Maréchal, and will act upon it. Take care that all the company are invited."

The old maréchal looked perfectly aghast at the command, but did not venture to offer any remonstrance.

"See it be done," echoed the Regent, laughing at Villeroi's consternation. "Your majesty is quite right. Too much honour cannot be shown M. Law."

"And in honouring my friends, your majesty confers most honour upon me," said Law.

"These are but trifling favours, sir, and scarcely merit your thanks," said Louis. "We have better things in store for you. Have we not, mon oncle?"

"Ay, that we have," replied the Regent. "But enough for the present. Does your majesty desire to tarry here longer?"

"No," replied Louis. "I have had a surfeit of strange

sights, and have no appetite for more. Adieu, M. Law I shall ever retain a pleasant recollection of my visit to the Rue Quincampoix."

He then arose, and taking the hand of the Regent, graciously saluted the company, who drew aside, and bent reverentially as he passed out.

His youthful majesty was followed by the Duc de Bourbon and Villeroi; and in this manner he was conducted to his carriage, which awaited him in the Rue Saint Denis, at the rear of the house.

End of the Fifth Book.

BOOK VI.—THE COMPTROLLER-GENERAL.

I.

THE REALISERS.

HITHERTO, great and unquestionable benefits had flowed to France from Law's System. Commerce had not only been revived, but was continually on the increase. The number of manufactures was prodigiously augmented. Evidences of general prosperity were proclaimed in a manner the most unmistakable—not only in the improvement of trade and commerce, but by the liquidation of debts, and the almost total cessation of failures. Great public works were commenced. Splendid hotels and maisons de plaisance were built. Barracks were for the first time constructed; the Pont de Blois was built; and the Canal de Bourgogne planned. Some of the noblest buildings of Paris date from Law's epoch. During the reign of Louis XIV., mendicity had existed to a frightful extent, but it was now confidently anticipated that pauperism would cease. Many oppres-

sive taxes were lightened or altogether removed. Exiles were invited to return. Advances were made at two per cent. to manufacturers and tradesmen of credit. Two millions were devoted to the liberation of prisoners for debt; and large sums unjustly seized by the Chamber of Justice, under the Duc de Noailles, were restored. Hospitals were built and endowed, and an immense boon was conferred upon the public by the establishment of gratuitous instruction at the University of Paris.

These were the immediate fruits of the System; and with such results it is no wonder that its author should become the object of popular idolatry.

Besides those enumerated, many other beneficial measures were contemplated by Law, but unfortunately time was never afforded him for the realisation of his vast designs.

As yet, however, confidence in the System remained unshaken, and the power and popularity of its founder increased. But even at this juncture, when the public infatuation was at its height, when the rise in the shares of the Company was steadily maintained, when the billets de banque were preferred to gold, there were some persons who, seeing further than the mass, and apprehending a crisis at no distant date, began cautiously to convert their paper into gold.

In the first instance, these "Realisers," as they were termed, were almost entirely composed of English, Dutch, and Genoese speculators; but very soon some of the more cautious of the Mississippians followed their example. By a manœuvre concerted among themselves, the price of shares was maintained, by a set of persons who combined together, for a fortnight at twenty thousand livres, and during this time they sold. After inundating the Rue Quincampoix with actions, they carried their notes to the Bank, and converted them into specie.

By publishing edicts calculated to enhance the value of paper, and diminish that of gold, Law endeavoured to defeat these manœuvres, but in spite of all his efforts to counteract them they were still carried on.

"The Banque Royale," says Duhautchamp, in reference to these combinations, "would have always been in a state to pay all the billets presented to it, had not the value of all the paper emanating from the operations of the System been raised by manœuvres to the enormous sum of six millions! People of all conditions, having no other object than to follow the operations of the System, employed the principal dealers to obtain the value of their effects. These merchants, made aware of the manœuvre by the parties who desired to draw them into their operations, sought to profit by the favourable conjuncture which allowed the shareholders sufficient time to get rid of their shares—that is to say, to negotiate their paper imperceptibly, and not by a single stroke. With this design they employed all their funds, not to maintain the shares in a proportionable balance, but to kindle a flame which might last for a few days. The movements of the greedy Mississippians having caused the old shares of the Occident to rise to eighteen and twenty thousand livres, and the new subscriptions in proportion, enabled the principal shareholders, whose porte-feuilles were full of paper, to convert their shares into billets de banque, with as much profit as they could hope to obtain by waiting longer. From this moment they meditated a retreat, and thought seriously of realising their funds, either in specie, jewellery, landed property, personal property, furniture, or anything more solid than paper. The first Realisers having restored gold from the contempt into which it had fallen, the other Mississippians, who perceived the scarceness of the metal, flung themselves upon everything else they could find, and made lands, houses, and goods rise six or seven times above their value."

Further on the same writer remarks: "As to the new men, finding themselves overwhelmed with paper, they made all imaginable efforts to realise; whereby the necessaries of life rose to a most exorbitant price. The drapers and mercers sold at twenty-five crowns the yard cloth for which they had before asked sixteen or eighteen francs—and velvets, silks, and other stuffs in the same propor

tion. The rents of houses were most exorbitant. In certain pieces of goldsmith's work the graver's labour cost more than double the price of the gold itself. At last all was so upset that sensible persons were perplexed how to act. A prodigious number of new coaches embarrassed the city, so that it was scarcely possible to approach the principal streets, especially those leading to the Rue Quincampoix. Three-fourths of the people of the provinces had rushed to Paris: those who could not share in the fortunes already made sought to embark in the new operations. The deputies of companies and corporate bodies who had come up to receive the reimbursement of their rents, had no sooner touched their funds than they carried them off to realise them. Among the great millionnaires, Vernesobre, instead of buying lands and houses, or monopolising merchandise, like Vignolles, another Mississippian, realised thirty millions in gold, and contrived to send it out of the kingdom. Madame Caumont, who had not the same facilities as Vernesobre, who was a cashier at the Bank, pounced upon lands and houses. She bought a quantity of signorial lands, as well in the provinces as in the neighbourhood of Paris, and by this means acquired many superb hotels—amongst others, the Hôtel de Pompone, in the Place des Victoires. The panic which seized those who had not given in to the practices we have described, was doubly disastrous to the credit of the paper by the precipitate sale which they effected when the millionnaires had carried off all the specie and all the billets de banque they could procure; but in spite of all this, the slightest suspicion of a new decree always excited a brisk movement in the Rue Quincampoix—and this served as a pretext to raise or lower the actions. The strongest, who desired to sell largely, boldly announced that the decree would be to the advantage of the paper, and distributed billets de banque; if, on the contrary, they designed to buy a large amount, they interpreted the decree in a different manner, making a manœuvre in the opposite direction. By such management they sustained for more than fifteen days the actions of the Occident at eighteen thou-

sand livres, so as to allow themselves time to make all right."

At this juncture a grand assemblage of the directors and principal shareholders of the Compagnie des Indes took place in the Hôtel Mazarin. The meeting comprised not only the Duc de Bourbon, the Prince de Conti, the Duc de la Force, and many of the aristocracy, but all the new millionnaires, and it was remarked that these parvenus were more splendidly attired than the nobles, and that the equipages awaiting them in the Rue de Richelieu were the finest to be seen there. The Regent presided, but the discussions were conducted by Law.

It appeared, from the statement of the director-general, that the enormous number of six hundred and twenty-four thousand shares had been created, of which the king possessed one hundred thousand, and the company an equal number. The profits of the company were estimated at twelve millions, and Law proposed thenceforward to pay a dividend of forty per cent. on the shares,—an announcement which was received with loud cheers. No one questioned the correctness of Law's statement. He had accomplished so many financial miracles, that to doubt him now was impossible.

Immediately after this meeting, such was the frenzy of the jobbers in the Rue Quincampoix, that the shares mounted higher than ever. But this extraordinary rise chiefly benefited the Realisers, and such heavy drains were made by them upon the Bank, that its vast reserve of gold became perceptibly diminished.

Alarmed at these proceedings, Law endeavoured to check them by an edict which raised the value of the billets de banque five per cent. above that of specie. But, in spite of this, the drain of gold still continued.

As it was absolutely necessary to avert the danger by which the System was threatened, and as this could only be accomplished by getting the whole power into his own hands to baffle the designs of his enemies, Law signified to the Regent that he had at last made up his mind to comply with the conditions which would enable him to accept the office of comptroller-general of finance.

"I am very glad to find you have got rid of your scruples," said the prince, smiling. "Dubois shall send the Abbé Tencin to you to-morrow morning. I have no doubt he will convince you of your errors, and make a good Catholic of you. But what will Lady Catherine say to your conversion? I know she is strongly opposed to it."

"I have not yet communicated my design to her," replied Law. "But whatever arguments she may employ, I shall remain firm."

"I hope so," said the Regent. "As long as this bar to your promotion exists, I cannot help you as I fain would do, neither can I remove your enemy, D'Argenson, from the post of minister of finances. You have done wisely in coming to this decision. Prepare for a visit from the Abbé Tencin to-morrow morning."

II.

HOW LAW BECAME A CONVERT TO THE FAITH OF ROME.

On the following morning, as Law and Lady Catherine were alone together in her ladyship's exquisitely furnished boudoir, which looked upon the magnificent gardens at the back of their hotel, Law, not without some misgiving, opened the matter to her. She heard him with dismay.

"I see that the step I am about to take does not meet your approval," he said; "but let me explain my motives for it. I must either become minister, and so have entire control of the finances of the country, or see the wondrous work I have raised with so much labour perish. I have attained a pinnacle of greatness, but shall be cast down unless I can make my footing secure. You do not comprehend the extraordinary difficulties and dangers that beset a position like mine, or you would not be surprised that I seek to strengthen myself."

Lady Catherine looked at him steadily for a moment, and then said: "If your System can only be saved by the sacrifice of principle you are prepared to make, let it perish, but be true to yourself. Let us retire from this splendour in which we have lived so long, and which has not been altogether productive of happiness. I will readily give it up."

"It cannot be," said Law. "You might as well ask a general to throw down his arms, and quit the field at the moment of victory, as urge me to retreat. What would all France—all Europe—think of my retirement?"

"What will all good men think when they hear you have abjured your faith?" she rejoined. "But you will not do it."

At this moment Thierry entered, and informed his master that the Abbé Tencin had come according to appointment.

"Show him to my cabinet, and say I will be with him presently," observed Law. And as Thierry departed, he said, with a forced smile, "You can guess the object of the abbé's visit, I suppose?"

"I can," she replied, sadly. "Oh! as you love me—as you would not make me wretched—let me implore you not to go near him! Send him away. Let me use all the influence I possess with you to deter you from the fatal step you are about to take, for fatal I am sure it will be. Nothing but ill consequences will flow from it. Hitherto, prosperity has attended your career, but how can you hope for a continuance of it, if you thus provoke Heaven's anger? You are about to become a proselyte to the faith of Rome, not from conviction, but from unworthy motives—forgive me, if I use strong terms, but you know they are prompted by affection."

"Why should you doubt my sincerity?" rejoined Law. "Why do you assume that I do not really incline to the Romish faith? Let me tell you that I should have joined that Church long ago, but from consideration for you."

"If it be so—though I can scarce believe you," she rejoined, "let consideration for me prevent you from joining that idolatrous Church now."

"Be content, Kate. I do not ask you to become an idolator. You shall have your own way, let me have mine."

"This is the first real unhappiness I have felt since our marriage. Henceforth there will be a bar between us."

"Tut! tut! there will be no bar," he rejoined. "Be reasonable, and dismiss your fears. But mark me, Kate —when the Abbé Tencin has done with me, I wish him to see our children."

"You do not desire that they, too, should be converted?" she cried.

"I have not time for further discussion now," he rejoined, rising from his chair. "Do as I bid you without questioning, Kate."

And he hastily quitted the room.

For a moment Lady Catherine thought of following him, but feeling convinced from his manner that any further attempt to move him would be futile, she sank back in her chair, and gave vent to her affliction in a flood of tears.

She was roused by the entrance of Belinda, who was still a guest at the Hôtel Law.

Lady Catherine told her all that had occurred, adding, "You will acknowledge that I have good reason to be unhappy. This is the heaviest blow that has ever fallen on me."

"You are wrong to take the matter so much to heart," replied Belinda. "For my part, I really cannot blame Mr. Law for the step he is about to take. It is unavoidable. To be comptroller-general he must renounce his religion, and become ostensibly a Catholic. I say *ostensibly*, because I dare say he will secretly be as good a Protestant as ever."

"It may be so—but what dreadful hypocrisy! I shudder to think of it!" exclaimed Lady Catherine.

"Ah! my dear, you must not judge your husband too harshly. He is in a peculiar position."

"And then my children! Why should they be forced to abjure their religion? I will never consent to it—never!" cried Lady Catherine.

"Your son is too young to understand any points of doctrine," said Belinda. "But as regards your daughter, she scarcely requires conversion, for she is more than half a Catholic already. I have my information from a good source—Colombe Laborde."

"If Colombe told you so it must be correct, for she knows Kate's sentiments better than any one else," rejoined Lady Catherine. "I hope Colombe has not led my poor child into the paths of error."

"Not intentionally, I am certain," said Belinda. "But you must obey your husband's injunctions, Kate."

"I suppose I must," rejoined Lady Catherine. "Oh! Belinda, I begin to be weary of the life I am leading. I am tired of splendour. I am sick of the adulation of these great people, who court me, and pay me homage, only to obtain favours from my husband. I treat them haughtily—not from pride, but because I despise their meanness. I well know their hollowness and insincerity, and that if any reverse were to happen to Mr. Law, they would at once turn their backs upon me."

"Very likely, my dear. 'Tis the way of the world. And this proves how necessary it is for Mr. Law to maintain his position by every means in his power. So don't blame him. For my part, I think him the best and kindest of men, and I am sure he is always actuated by high and honourable motives."

"You do him no more than justice, Belinda. But I wish he would remain true to his religion."

"Well, as it can't be helped, you must submit. But let us change the subject, and return to Colombe. I wish we could see her united to Evelyn Harcourt. Is there any chance of it?"

"I begin to despair," replied Lady Catherine. "M. Laborde is still obdurate as ever, and insists upon the fulfilment of her engagement with M. Cossard. The utmost I have been able to accomplish has been to delay the marriage from time to time on one pretext or another, in the hope that Cossard's patience would be exhausted, and that he would retire in disgust, but I have been disappointed."

"Poor Colombe! I pity her much. She is a charming girl, and deserves a better fate than to be sacrificed to such an odious wretch as Cossard. No one knows better than myself how unhappy a woman is who is tied to a man she cannot love, and were Colombe wedded to this Cossard she would be miserable, as I was in my first marriage. You will have other anxieties soon, Kate. In a year or two you will have to choose a husband for your daughter."

"We have already plenty of suitors," replied Lady Catherine. "Yesterday we had an offer from the Prince de Tarento; and I may say, without boasting, that her hand has been sought by representatives of the noblest families of France, Germany, Italy, and England. But the husband I have in view for her is her cousin, Lord Wallingford."

"And a very good husband he would make her, no doubt," replied Belinda. "But don't force her inclinations."

"That I will never do," said Lady Catherine. "Neither will Mr. Law; and for this reason he will not entertain any proposition, however important, at present. But I must now go and prepare my children for an interview with the Abbé Tencin," said Lady Catherine. "My heart revolts from the task."

"Let me go with you," said Belinda. "I may be of use."

And they quitted the room together.

As may be imagined, the Abbé Tencin did not experience much difficulty in the work of conversion, and after a few visits he declared that his illustrious proselyte was in a fit state to be received into the bosom of the Church of Rome.

The abjuration of heresy was solemnised with great pomp in the church of Saint Roch, in the presence of a vast assemblage, which comprehended all the highest nobility; and Law, with his son and daughter, who attended with him, having made public profession of the Romish faith, were admitted into the communion of that Church.

For this labour in the cause of his religion the Abbé Tencin received a gratification of two hundred thousand livres, and as the sacred edifice in which the ceremonial took place was at that time in an unfinished state, Law, with his usual liberality, bestowed five hundred thousand livres for its completion.

III.

OF THE QUARREL BETWEEN LAW AND THE EARL OF STAIR.

LAW'S conversion by the Abbé Tencin, who afterwards became a cardinal, gave rise to the following pasquil:

Fi de ton zèle séraphique,
Malheureux Abbé de Tencin;
Depuis que Law est Catholique,
Tout le royaume est capucin.

The event was celebrated by a grand entertainment given by the Duc de Bourbon, at which the Regent and the whole of the court were present.

Among the many distinguished guests assembled on this occasion was the British ambassador, the Earl of Stair; and in the course of the evening his lordship found an opportunity of saying a few words in private to the Regent.

"Monseigneur," he began, "I am sure you would regret that anything should occur to disturb the good understanding at present subsisting between the court of my royal master and that of your highness."

"Your excellency is quite right," rejoined the Regent. "I should greatly regret it. But I see no chance of our friendly relations being interrupted. To what do you allude?"

"I will speak frankly," replied Lord Stair. "It is generally understood that Mr. Law's conversion, which has taken place this day, and which we are here met to

celebrate, is a preliminary step to his elevation to the office of comptroller-general of finance."

"Suppose it to be so, what then?" rejoined the Regent, coldly.

"I have only to remark, monseigneur, that the appointment could not be agreeable to my royal master, because Mr. Law's predilections are known to be favourable to the fallen dynasty. Indeed, I have proof that letters have passed between him and the Chevalier de Saint George."

"Your excellency's information is correct," said the Regent, "but as you may possibly be ignorant of the purport of those letters, I will acquaint you with it. At your instance, my lord, the pension allowed to the proscribed royal family by his late majesty, Louis XIV., was discontinued; but since M. Law has risen to his present eminence, and has become the dispenser of so many bounties, the unfortunate prince wrote to him thus—I will give the precise words: 'I address myself to you as to a good Scotsman, and a faithful servant of the Regent, and I ask you to assist me.' The letter was laid before me by M. Law, who besought my permission to pay out of his own funds the pension which had been stopped at the Treasury. Of course I could not refuse the request."

"Mr. Law may have been influenced by worthy motives in this affair," said the ambassador; "but I think his generosity ill judged. It is certain to be misconstrued. The circumstance mentioned by your highness strengthens my opinion that the appointment will be unsatisfactory to my royal master. Mr. Law must be regarded as an enemy of England. He has been heard to boast that he will ruin our trade and commerce, and make us subsidiary to France."

"I never heard him make such a boast," replied the Regent. "But your lordship cannot complain of fair rivalry. You cannot expect us to forego advantages to please you."

"I am not foolish enough to expect such concession, monseigneur," rejoined Lord Stair. "But I am too well aware of Mr. Law's disposition towards the country of

his birth not to feel uneasy at his accession to power. I am certain it will be his aim to cause a disagreement between your highness and the king my master. Only a few days ago he announced to some friends of mine his intention of publishing a treatise, to prove that it is impossible for Great Britain to pay her debts."

"If your country is solvent, the book will do no harm," laughed the Regent.

"The book may not, monseigneur, but its author may. As comptroller-general, Mr. Law will be in a condition to damage my country, and everything indicates that he will try to do so. We stand too much in the way of his ambitious designs to allow him to look upon us with a friendly eye. All these things considered, I repeat, that the elevation of such a man to the chief post of your government must be displeasing to the king my master, and I would fain hope the appointment may not take place."

"Your excellency is uneasy without cause," said the Regent. "M. Law is resolved to advance the prosperity of France to the highest possible point, but not at the expense of Great Britain. As to the rest, I will take good care there shall be no misunderstanding between the two courts."

"Your highness is then resolved to make this adventurer prime minister?" said Lord Stair, unable to control himself.

"If I had not previously intended to do so, your excellency's observations would decide me," replied the Regent, with dignity. "I shall appoint a minister, not to please England, but to serve France."

At this moment Law himself appeared, and seeing them engaged in discourse, was about to retire, when the Regent called him back, saying, "We have been talking about you."

"I have no wish to disguise my opinions," said Lord Stair. "I hope your highness will tell Mr. Law that I object to his appointment to the office of comptroller-general for two reasons. First, that he is a secret friend

of the Pretender; secondly, that he is the avowed enemy of Great Britain."

"If I am the avowed enemy of England, my lord—though I deny that I am so—you need fear no perfidy on my part," rejoined Law. "Had the unfortunate James Stuart perished at Nonancourt by the hand of the assassin Douglas, my assistance would not have been required. But as the prince happily escaped that foul plot, I have aided him, and shall continue to aid him as long as I am permitted to do so by his Highness the Regent."

At this allusion to the dark design of which he was known to be the instigator, Lord Stair became livid with rage.

"And now, monseigneur," pursued Law, turning to the Regent, "I have a word to say to Lord Stair on my own account. I charge him with being the author of a plot against me—not to take away my life, as he would have done that of the Chevalier de Saint George, but to destroy my credit. The late attack upon the Bank was his contrivance. Of this I have ample proof."

"It is a calumny," rejoined the ambassador. "I may have said to certain of my countrymen that I prefer specie to your paper, and they may have acted on the hint, and repaired to the Bank, but as to any combination, I repudiate the charge, and challenge you to make good the assertion. I trust your highness will hesitate before committing the guidance of the state-chariot to this modern Phaeton. Most assuredly he will upset it."

"You go too far in your remarks, my lord," said the Regent. "M. Law is now virtually comptroller-general. Let me hope that this difference between you may be adjusted."

"Impossible, monseigneur," said Law. "After what has passed between Lord Stair and myself, not even official intercourse can take place between us."

"Then, my lord," said the Regent, turning to the ambassador, "I shall be compelled to ask your recal."

"I am sorry to have lost the personal credit I have so long enjoyed with your highness," replied Lord Stair,

"but I have spoken with candour, and you will one day, I feel convinced, admit that I have given you good counsel."

And with a profound obeisance to the Regent, and a haughty bow to Law, he withdrew.

All difficulties being removed, the Regent conferred upon Law the title of Comptroller-General of Finance, and D'Argenson had the bitter mortification of surrendering his post to the rival he detested, and was obliged to content himself with the office of keeper of the seals.

Law had now reached the pinnacle of his ambition. He had become the equal of the highest nobility of the kingdom—nay, their superior. He had triumphed over all his enemies, and as the Regent was entirely guided by his counsels, he might be said to hold the reins of government in his own hands. In the space of four years, to employ the language of Voltaire, he had literally become, from a Scotsman, a Frenchman by naturalisation; from a Protestant, a Catholic; from an adventurer, the lord of the finest estates in the kingdom; and from a banker, prime minister.

The power and ability of the new comptroller-general were not merely recognised by the nation thus placed under his governance, but by all the great states of Europe, and the British ministry, finding that Lord Stair had irritated him, and was personally disagreeable to him, determined to recal that ambassador, and with this design immediately despatched Earl Stanhope, one of the secretaries of state, to Paris.

The popular enthusiasm, which found expression in a hundred different ways, satisfied the Regent that his choice of a minister was eminently agreeable to the nation at large. All ranks of society vied with each other in paying court to the new comptroller-general. Honours were showered upon him more thickly than ever, and his portrait was everywhere to be seen, with these lines affixed to it:

Principe sub recto Gallorum sceptra tenente,
Publica nunc rectè Quæstor hic aera regit:
Aeraque tractandi summâ perfectus in arte,
Et regem et populum divitem utrumque fecit.

Honours from abroad were paid him, and the freedom of his native city of Edinburgh was transmitted to him in a valuable gold box.

It was at this time that Law negotiated with Lord Londonderry for the purchase of the famous Pitt diamond, which afterwards became the brightest ornament of the French crown. This diamond, which was nearly as large as a pigeon's egg, of exquisite purity, and astonishing brilliancy, received the name of "The Regent."

To prove his admiration of Law's genius, the Earl of Islay republished one of the great financier's early treatises, to which he affixed this motto from Cicero, "O terram illam beatam qui hunc virum exceperit; hanc ingratam si ejecerit, miseram si amiserit."

The splendour of Law's mode of life increased with the elevation he had attained. He still continued to occupy the same hotel as heretofore in the Place Vendôme, but his large establishment was considerably augmented, and his banquets and fêtes were more sumptuous than ever. But no distractions of pleasure were ever allowed to interfere with his attention to affairs of state, all his available time and energies being unremittingly devoted to the fulfilment of his duties.

It was at this moment, when he was apparently most secure, when all were paying him homage, when the streets resounded with his name, and when acclamations attended his appearance, that intimations of the terrible defeat he was about to experience began to be felt.

IV.

HOW SPECIE WAS PROSCRIBED BY LAW.

The constant drain of specie from the Bank still continuing, Law was forced to adopt measures from which he had hitherto abstained. Determined to push the System to its utmost limits, he now prohibited the payment in gold of any sum exceeding three hundred livres. Bills of exchange were to be paid only in bank-notes, and creditors were empowered to demand notes from their debtors.

After resorting to every expedient to give to paper the preference to gold and silver, the comptroller-general issued a decree entirely abolishing the use of specie, except certain pieces of little value which had been recently coined. By this decree it was ordained that no person, of whatever condition, not even a member of a religious community, should keep more than five hundred livres in specie, on pain of confiscation of all exceeding that amount, with a fine of ten thousand livres. Another decree prohibited, under a penalty of three thousand livres, the payment of a sum of a hundred livres or upwards except in billets de banque.

To enforce strict fulfilment of these edicts, domiciliary visits were authorised, and all the rigours practised by the Chamber of Justice, under the Duc de Noailles, were revived. As at that frightful period, informers were encouraged and rewarded with half the treasure seized. No habitations were exempted from search. The hotels of the nobles, privileged places, religious houses, palaces and royal mansions, were visited.

But these severe enactments were violated with impunity by certain exalted personages. In defiance of the edict, the Prince de Conti paid all the notes in his possession into the Bank, and Law, unwilling to offend him,

allowed him to carry off gold and silver sufficient to fill three waggons.

The offender was sharply reprimanded for his conduct by the Regent, but this did not deter the Duc de Bourbon from following his brother's example, and he obtained specie to the amount of twenty-five millions.

Justly indignant at this proceeding, the Regent sent for the duke, and addressed him thus:

"I am very angry with you, M. le Duc. It seems to me that you wish to destroy in a single moment the fabric which it has cost M. Law so much time and pains to erect. You empty the Bank by drawing from it twenty-five millions in four days—while the Prince de Conti has taken out twenty-five millions at the same time. What will you both do with so much money? Are you and your brother acting in conformity with the last ordinance of his majesty, which prohibits all his subjects, without exception, from having more than five hundred livres in specie in their possession? Answer me that question, M. le Duc."

"I admit that I have cashed twenty-five millions at the Bank, monseigneur," replied the duke, in a deprecatory tone. "But the money is all gone."

"All gone! Impossible!" cried the Regent.

"It is nevertheless true, monseigneur. It has been swept away as if by magic. Let the commissioners pay me a visit. They will find nothing."

"Bah! you have taken good care to hide the money."

"It is hidden in the pockets of my creditors, monseigneur. I have not touched a single louis d'or."

"It would serve you right to compel you to render a strict account of the gold you have taken, M. le Duc; and were it not for the scandal which such a course must occasion, I would do so. It is unworthy of you and the Prince de Conti to act thus. Think of the injurious effect your proceedings will have upon the Bank."

"Our proceedings will benefit the Bank, monseigneur, by proving that it has an ample reserve fund of gold."

"Well, have you done all the mischief you intend? Have you any more billets de banque left?"

"Only a million or two, which I require for my own private expenditure," replied the duke. "I promise not to disturb the Bank again. I am sorry to find M. Law has been so much embarrassed by the Realisers."

"The Realisers who have most embarrassed him, M. le Duc, are yourself and the Prince de Conti."

"Well, I will let him alone in future—nay, more, I will support him in all his measures against the Realisers. Gold, I am informed, has been sent away in prodigious quantities into England."

"I hope the drain is now stopped," said the Regent. "A vast deal of specie has been recently paid in. The former chancellor, M. de Pontchartrain, has sent in fifty-seven thousand louis d'or of the old coinage, each worth sixty-two francs, and many others have paid in large sums. Besides this, several important seizures have been recently made by the commissioners. Six thousand gold marcs and twenty thousand silver marcs were found in the house of a paper-maker named Sohier. Fifty thousand marcs in gold and silver were likewise discovered in the house of M. Dupin. Forty millions in gold have been seized on the frontiers of Switzerland. But the capture most gratifying to the comptroller-general has been fourteen millions which the Frères Paris had secretly transmitted into Lorraine, in order to purchase lands."

"I am glad Frères Paris have been caught," said the duke. "And I rejoice to think that the coffers of the Bank have been so abundantly replenished. I hope that, like the cask of the Danaides, they may not be emptied as soon as filled."

"We will take care to prevent that," said the Regent.

"The immense deposits alluded to by your highness," observed the duke, "will revive the spirits of the Mississippians, and cause them to speculate again as briskly as ever. Is there to be a fresh issue of shares?"

"Not at present," replied the Regent. "The shares already issued amount to more than six milliards."

"Another milliard will not signify," observed the duke, laughing.

"Another milliard would destroy the System," said the Regent.

"Not if paper can be substituted for specie," observed the duke. "Since gold and silver are proscribed, we shall now be able to test the correctness of M. Law's scheme."

"I am confident it will stand the test applied to it," said the Regent.

"Hum! we shall see," rejoined the duke. "At all events, I am on the safe side," he mentally ejaculated.

At this moment, the President Lambert de Vernon was announced by the usher, and the Duc de Bourbon took his departure, secretly congratulating himself on having escaped so well.

"To what am I indebted for this visit, M. le Président?" inquired the Regent of Vernon, as soon as they were alone.

"Monseigneur," replied the other, "I am come to denounce a certain individual who has in his possession five hundred thousand livres in gold."

"What! M. le Président?" cried the Regent, contemptuously. "Is it on such an infamous errand that you have come to me? Would you turn informer?"

"Monseigneur, I simply fulfil your own ordinance. You have made the law, and I must per force obey it."

"Very true," replied the Regent, sternly. "And I suppose you expect the informer's fee?"

"Naturally, monseigneur. I expect two hundred and fifty thousand livres."

"You shall have them, if you choose to disgrace yourself by accepting them."

"It will be no disgrace to me, monseigneur. On the contrary, I shall save half my fortune. The person I have come to denounce is myself."

"Aha! a clever ruse!" cried the Regent, laughing. "Well, you shall keep half your gold."

"I humbly thank your highness. I would rather have it than ten times the amount in paper."

"Fi, M. le Président. Don't say a word against the billets de banque, or I shall compel you to pay in the whole amount."

V.

THE BANDOLIERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

A GREAT deal of popular discontent was caused at this time by the arbitrary proceedings adopted by the comptroller-general for the colonisation of the Mississippi. The vagabonds and fugitives from justice, who had been transported in the first instance to the new colony, having caused much disorder, recruits were now sought among those whose sole crime was poverty. All the houses of refuge for the poor were emptied, the Hospital, Bicêtre, La Pitié, La Salpêtrière, Les Enfants-Trouvés, each furnishing their quota. Discharged servants, and workmen out of employ, were likewise seized. These forcible abductions caused great uneasiness, especially among the poorer classes, who naturally felt that their own turn might come.

Two companies of archers were formed, whose business it was to arrest all persons unable to give a satisfactory account of themselves. From their costume and equipments, these archers were denominated "Bandoliers of the Mississippi." They wore long blue coats, broad cross-belts, and hats laced with silver, and were armed with swords, muskets, and pistols. Marching about in detachments of a dozen, with an officer at their head, the bandoliers performed their task with so much zeal, that five thousand persons were carried off by them in ten days. Many of these were artisans and workmen, but a large proportion consisted of young women. These unjust arrests, and the shocking treatment to which the captives were subjected, roused the popular indignation.

At last an incident occurred which well-nigh caused a general rising. A hundred country maidens, who had come to Paris in quest of service, and had found a temporary asylum with the good Sisters of Saint Catherine's Hospital, suddenly disappeared. It was supposed they had been carried off by the bandoliers of the

Mississippi. While this question was being discussed by an incensed mob, the bandoliers were seen carrying off two young persons. Exasperated beyond endurance by this spectacle, the populace armed themselves with such implements as came readiest to hand, and set upon the archers. Twenty were killed upon the spot, and a still greater number were carried in a dying state to the Hôtel-Dieu. This conflict produced but little effect. A proclamation was made by sound of trump that each brigade of bandoliers should be accompanied by an exempt of police, and the bandoliers were expressly forbidden, under heavy penalties, from arresting any citizen, artisan, or journeyman labourer, or any other person not a pauper; but, in spite of this, the arrests were soon conducted with as much recklessness and inhumanity as before, to the great prejudice of the comptroller-general's popularity.

VI.

IN WHICH COSSARD MAKES A CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATION TO LABORDE.

WHILE the arbitrary measures we have described were being taken by Law to support the System, the directors of the Compagnie des Indes were not without strong apprehensions of an approaching crisis.

One day Cossard invited Laborde to a tête-à-tête dinner at his charming maison de plaisance, and after the repast, when all the attendants had retired, he said,

"I want to have some confidential talk to you, my good friend, about the position of the Company. I do not desire to alarm you, but it would be improper to conceal from you that its affairs are in a very critical state, and I do not think M. Law will be able to avert the dangers by which he is menaced."

"I have felt this for some time," said Laborde; "and I need not say our position gives me the greatest uneasiness. A depreciation in the value of our stock has already taken place, and unless the downward tendency can be checked, the credit of the Company must go, and we shall be crushed by the fall of the edifice."

"That is quite certain, unless we take timely precautions for our safety," said Cossard.

"But it is now too late," groaned Laborde. "All our gold is gone. On the publication of the edict I paid twenty thousand louis d'or into the Bank."

"Not a single coin of which will you get back," remarked Cossard.

"I fear not. But I suffered too much at the time of the Visa to run the risk of being denounced again."

"Some risk must be run," said Cossard. "We may as well be ruined now as when the general crash comes —as come it certainly will, and that before long. What a pity you did not realise sooner!"

"You blame me, but I fear you have not acted more prudently yourself."

"You are mistaken," said Cossard, with a cunning look, and bringing his chair close to him as he spoke. "I have not been so imprudent as you suppose. I *have* secretly realised. I have got forty millions of livres out of the fire, and, what is more, I have them safe."

"Forty millions!" exclaimed Laborde. "I rejoice to hear it. I won't ask what you have done with the money, but you say you have secured it."

"It is out of the reach of the commissaries," replied Cossard. "I have no secrets from you. I have contrived to remit the whole amount to London, whither I shall shortly follow it."

"But how will you accomplish this?" cried Laborde. "I will own to you that I once thought of flying into Holland myself. But the risk is too great. No one is allowed to leave the country. How will you obtain a passport?"

"I have already got one," said Cossard. "All my preparations for flight are made."

"Then you don't intend to fulfil your engagement to Colombe?" said Laborde.

"Pardon me," rejoined Cossard, "that is the very point I am approaching. I hope to take Colombe with me, and, as you will see, it is of the utmost importance that the marriage should take place without delay. Once married to your daughter, I will carry her to my château in Normandy, and thence pass over into England. You must find means to join us in London."

After considerable hesitation and misgiving, Laborde agreed to the plan, and next morning proceeded to the Hôtel Law, where he had a private interview with his daughter, and explained to her that for many reasons the marriage she had contracted with Cossard could no longer be delayed. Finding he produced but little impression, he said:

"I will give you three days for reflection. If, at the end of that time, you are prepared to obey me and marry Cossard, well and good. If not, you are no longer daughter of mine. You now know my fixed determination."

With this he took his departure, leaving Colombe drowned in tears. He next went to Cossard, and told him what he had done. His intended son-in-law did not appear entirely satisfied with the arrangement, but said,

"I must have a positive answer from Colombe at the time you have appointed. I will submit to no further delay."

"I don't expect it," replied Laborde. "You have been too much trifled with already. I have laid my paternal injunctions on Colombe, and she will not dare to disobey me. Come to the Hôtel Law on the morning I have fixed for her decision, and I engage to deliver her to you."

On the following day Laborde heard a rumour that greatly alarmed him. It was to the effect that a director, whose name was kept secret, had been 'realising' largely, and the matter was then under investigation. On hearing this he went immediately to his intended son-in-law, to put him upon his guard, but Cossard manifested no uneasiness.

"Let them pursue their investigations," he said. "I am not afraid. There are reports of this kind every day. Nothing can be proved against me. I am going into the country, but I shall return to-morrow evening, and will meet you at the Hôtel Law at the appointed hour on the following morning."

During this interval Laborde had seen nothing of his daughter, deeming it best not to go near her, but he was fully determined to carry his point. Accordingly, at the hour agreed upon he made his appearance, and found Colombe with Lady Catherine Law.

"At Colombe's request I have consented to be present at this interview," said her ladyship. "In fact, she wishes me to communicate her decision to you. Will you permit me to state it?"

"No, miladi. I must have my daughter's decision from her own lips. Are you prepared to obey me, Colombe?"

"I cannot," she replied, distractedly. "Indeed, I cannot. Oh, dear Lady Catherine, plead for me!—plead for me! My only hope is in you."

"It is cruel of you to treat your daughter thus, M. Laborde," said Lady Catherine. "She would obey you if she could!"

Laborde, however, was too much excited to attend to her, but addressed himself to Colombe.

"I know why you thus thwart me," he cried. "But hope not to wed Evelyn Harcourt. Never will I consent to your union with him—never! I swear it!"

At this moment Law entered the room. Laborde was about to take his departure, but Law stopped him.

"If I mistake not, you are come here to arrange about Colombe's marriage with Cossard?" he said.

"I came for that purpose, monseigneur," replied Laborde.

"Then attend to me," said Law. "The marriage can not take place. Cossard has disappeared. We have ascertained that he obtained forty millions in gold from the Bank, and has remitted the amount to London. In all probability he is on his way thither, but the com-

missionnaires are on his track, and I do not think he will escape them."

"And this is the wretch to whom you would have sacrificed your daughter?" cried Lady Catherine. "But it is not too late to make her amends for all the anguish you have caused her. Give her to the man of her heart —to Evelyn Harcourt."

"I cannot," replied Laborde, in broken accents. "I have just sworn that I never will consent to her marriage with him."

And he hurried out of the room.

End of the Sixth Book.

BOOK VII.—THE COMTE DE HORN.

I.

HOW THE COMTE DE HORN AND HIS FRIENDS BECAME EMBARRASSED; AND IN WHAT WAY THEIR FUNDS WERE RECRUITED.

NOTWITHSTANDING the symptoms of an approaching crisis, the fury for stock-jobbing continued as great as ever, and the crowds in the Rue Quincampoix were undiminished. So long as paper would serve their turn, and procure them all the material enjoyments they desired, the Mississippians cared not for specie, but, on the contrary, affected to despise it. Having an apparently inexhaustible supply of wealth, they heeded not what they paid. Luxuries they would have, be the cost what it might. Their prodigalities were unbounded, and never, perhaps, except during the decadence of Rome, was so much license indulged in as by the Mississippians at this period.

Amongst the most dissolute and extravagant of the

many profligates then to be found in Paris, were the Comte de Horn and his two inseparable companions, De Mille and D'Etampes. Their days were passed in the Rue Quincampoix, and their nights in the gambling-houses and taverns. Their revels and excesses were the wonder of all who heard of them.

For a time they were fortunate in their speculations, and able to carry on their reckless career; but their prodigalities and losses at play emptied their porte-feuilles, and they began to grow embarrassed. Whenever he was in want of funds, De Mille applied without hesitation to Cossard, and never failed to obtain what he wanted. The disappearance of the director was, therefore, a very heavy blow to him, as it cut off a source of supply on which he had hitherto counted. To make matters worse, Cossard's flight occurred at a time when the trio were sadly in want of money.

"What a rascal the fellow must be to decamp in this manner, without giving us the slightest notice of his intentions," cried De Horn. "He has used us infamously."

"They say he has remitted forty millions in gold to London," said De Mille. "If I had suspected his design, he should not have got off without leaving two or three millions behind him. I am vexed at my own stupidity. I ought to have known he was a rogue."

"We must pay him a visit in London by-and-by, and see what can be made of him," said D'Etampes. "Meantime, our purses are empty."

"We must look to you, De Mille, to recruit our funds," said De Horn.

"I will try what I can do," replied the individual appealed to; "but I am by no means sanguine of success."

Shortly after this he set out with the intention of applying to his father. Ascertaining at the Bank that M. Laborde was gone to the Hôtel Law, he proceeded thither, and telling the Swiss porters that he had business of the utmost importance with M. Laborde, he was allowed admittance, and was ushered by Thierry into a salon, in which he found his father and sister. As soon as he had

recovered from the astonishment into which he was thrown by this unlooked-for and most unwelcome visit, Laborde demanded of his son, in a stern voice, how he dared thus to intrude himself; adding, that if he did not retire instantly, he would cause him to be ejected by the servants.

"For your own sake I advise you not to adopt such a course," rejoined De Mille. "Have you not a word to say to me, Colombe?" he added, turning to her. "It is long since I have seen you. If you have forgotten that you have a brother, I have not forgotten that I have a sister, to whom I am as fondly attached as ever."

"Colombe is not to be imposed upon by this idle profession of regard," interposed Laborde, sternly.

"By Heaven, I speak the truth!" cried De Mille. "Colombe is the sole being whom I really love. Speak to me, sister. I would rather have your reproaches than you should remain silent."

"I do not desire to reproach you, Raoul," she said. "But you have caused me so much grief—so much shame—that I cannot behold you without pain. The sight of you opens wounds which I thought were for ever closed. If you had changed your mode of life, I should be glad to see you again, but I know you are as reckless and profligate as ever."

"I see how it is," rejoined De Mille. "Cossard has calumniated me. Talking of Cossard, let me congratulate you on your liberation from that odious person. You will now be able to marry Evelyn Harcourt."

"No more of this," interposed his father. "An end must be put to an interview which is painful both to me and to Colombe. It is idle to ask why you have come here, when I know you can have but one object—money."

"It would be improper to contradict you, sir," replied De Mille. "I am dreadfully in want of money."

"I knew it," cried his father. "And why should I supply you with funds to continue your disorders and debauchery?—no! no! you shall have no money from me."

"I must have three or four thousand livres," rejoined

De Mille. "I don't intend to go hence without it," he added, seating himself, coolly.

"Villain! robber! you will drive me to do something desperate!" cried his father, shaking his clenched hand in his face, but only provoking a smile from De Mille.

"You had better accede to his demands, dear father, and let him go!" said Colombe.

"I am in no hurry," observed De Mille. "I am very comfortable here, and will wait till the old gentleman is perfectly cool."

"I shall go mad!" cried Laborde, trembling with passion.

"Better give me the money than do that," laughed De Mille.

"Let him have it—let him have it, dear father!" said Colombe. "Lady Catherine Law or Kate may come in, and then an explanation must ensue."

Perceiving he had gained his point, De Mille became quite easy. After a desperate struggle with himself, Laborde took out a porte-feuille, and said:

"Well, you shall have the money. But it is the last you will ever get from me."

"That remains to be seen," muttered his son. "I felt sure you would think better of it, sir," he added, aloud.

"This porte-feuille contains six thousand livres," said his father, giving it him—"double the amount you have asked for. Make good use of it, if you can."

"I will make the best possible use of it, sir, by taking it to the Fair of Saint-Germain to-morrow," replied De Mille. "I trust I shall not have to apply to you again."

"You may spare yourself the trouble. You shan't have another livre from me—not if it would save you from the executioner."

"Stay a moment, Raoul," said Colombe. "This money will enable you to quit Paris. Fly from temptations which will lead you to destruction."

"I have no intention of leaving Paris. I find it far too agreeable," replied De Mille.

And, bowing to his father, who turned from him in disgust, he quitted the room.

II.

THE FAIR OF SAINT-GERMAIN.

NEVER before had the Fair of Saint-Germain been so well attended as during the year in which the System was in vogue. Booths, theatres, gaming-houses, cabarets, cafés, wine-shops, and all other places of amusement were thronged.

The Fair, which was kept open for several weeks, was held in a large meadow contiguous to the ancient Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, to which wealthy religious establishment the revenues arising from the annual meeting accrued. The ground was divided into regular streets, consisting of booths or shops, built with timber; the principal streets on the side of the Rue des Quatre-Vents, by which the Fair was approached from the north, being occupied by dealers in bijouterie, ivory, sculpture, pictures, and wearing apparel. Here also were several cafés and cabarets. In other streets were booths in which were to be seen jugglers, rope-dancers, mountebanks, and marionettes. Besides these, there were caravans containing wild beasts, then a novelty to the Parisians. In the Fair there were no less than four large theatres, at which the principal actors from the regular theatres performed, and there was also a large building, in which masked balls and ballets were given.

The mania for gambling then prevailing in Paris was strongly displayed at the Fair of Saint-Germain, and at the cafés, cabarets, and tripots, with which the place abounded, stock-jobbing was conducted as in the Rue Quincampoix. Speculation, in fact, had become a necessity of existence to the Mississippians.

Although a police-regulation in force at the time interdicted play, under a penalty of three thousand livres, there were several gambling-houses where cards, dice, biribi, faro, lansquenet, and other games of chance were openly

played. In these tripots, billets de banque for fifty or sixty thousand livres were staked on a card or a cast of the die by the Mississippians, with as much unconcern as if the notes had been mere waste paper. Play, however, was not confined to the gambling-houses and cabarets, but went on in all the shops, where the tradesmen provided cards and dice for their customers, while the bystanders betted on the play.

The Fair of Saint-Germain, which, as we have shown, was the grand rendezvous of all the dissipated society of Paris—and at no period was society so dissipated as during the Regency—had special attractions for the Comte de Horn and his profligate companions, and it will not appear surprising that, after the opening of the Fair, they should abandon the Rue Quincampoix for the new scene of dissipation, and spend the whole of their time in mingling with the amusements of the place, doing business with the stock-jobbers in the cafés, playing at biribi or hazard with the dealers in bijouterie, gambling desperately in the tripots, revelling in the cabarets, and creating disturbances at the theatres and in the salle de danse.

During all this time a constant run of ill luck attended the Comte de Horn. He was unlucky in his speculations, and still more unlucky at play, and had it not been that his companions were somewhat more fortunate, and shared their purses with him, he would have been in a desperate plight. It was while haunting the Fair of Saint-Germain, and living in the dissolute manner we have described, that De Mille became acquainted with a number of reckless spendthrifts, whose habits and principles were congenial to his own, and he began to organise a body of desperadoes calculated to aid him in carrying out a scheme which he had conceived of wholesale plunder in the Rue Quincampoix.

The Comte de Horn, as we have already mentioned, was connected with the noblest families in the Low Countries, and one day, meeting his cousin, the young Duc d'Aremberg, a prince of the Pays Bas, he invited him to sup with

him at the Vieux Loup, the principal tavern in the Fair of Saint-Germain, where good cheer and excellent wine could be obtained, though at a most extravagant rate. The whole night was spent in revelry, the young topers trying who could drink most. Incredible was the number of flasks they emptied. About six o'clock in the morning they sallied forth, ready for any mischief, and followed by their lacqueys, each of whom bore a bottle of champagne and a goblet. After wandering through the deserted streets of the Fair, and disturbing the occupants of the booths by their shouts, they resolved to seek amusement elsewhere, and, passing along the Rue de Varennes and the Rue du Four, made their way into the Pont-Neuf, where they stopped to salute the equestrian statue of Henri Quatre, and drank a glass to the memory of the "vert galant" monarch, after which they proceeded towards the church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois.

As they entered the open space in front of this noble pile, one of the finest specimens of ecclesiastical architecture in Paris, they encountered a dismal procession, which ought to have put serious thoughts into their heads.

A bier, sustaining a coffin covered with a pall, surrounded by lighted tapers and candles, and provided with an aspersorium, was being borne slowly towards the porch of the church.

"Who goes there?" demanded the Comte de Horn of an old man who was kneeling on the ground in the path of the procession. "Who is being taken to his last home, I say, coquin?" he repeated.

"'Tis the Sieur Nigon, the procureur," replied the man. "He used to live in yonder cloister."

"What! my old friend Nigon!" cried De Horn, who had never heard of the defunct procureur before. "So he is gone. Poor fellow! I must bid him adieu."

So saying, he staggered forward, and placing himself in the way of the bier, ordered the bearers to halt and set down their load.

"Do not interrupt us in the performance of our duty,"

said a priest, advancing. He was a venerable-looking man, with a mild expression of countenance. "Stand aside and let us pass."

But, instead of complying, De Horn and his companions, attended by the lacqueys, surrounded the bier, and the count plucking aside the pall, disclosed the ghastly features of the dead man—the coffin being unclosed.

"Ah! my poor dear Nigon!" he cried. "I recognise you now. And so you have been foolish enough to die, eh? What was the cause of your death, my poor friend? Thirst, no doubt. Thirst kills us all. I should die if I didn't drink. To drink is to live. Wine will revive you. Drink, I say, my friend." And taking a goblet of champagne from his servant, he held it towards the corpse, continuing thus: "Cast off that hideous black mantle, quit these crows, and come and make merry with us."

"Cease this irreverent talk, and depart," cried the priest, "or I shall call upon those around me to drive you hence."

By this time a crowd had collected near the spot, but they were kept off by De Mille and the others, who had drawn their swords.

"I tell you my worthy friend Nigon died of thirst," cried De Horn. "He must have something to drink. If you won't allow him wine, he shall have water."

With this he vaulted upon the bier, and bestriding the coffin, seized the bénitier, and poured its contents upon the face of the deceased, calling out, "Drink, my poor friend, drink!"

"This is an act of dreadful impiety," cried the priest, horror-stricken. "Thou art a wretch abandoned of Heaven, and the curse of the Church will fall upon thee and upon thy godless companions."

Scandalised by the impious proceeding, the crowd made a rush upon the young men, and succeeded in disarming them, while the priest's attendants dragged De Horn from the bier. In the scuffle, however, the tapers were extinguished, and the pall was much damaged.

Anxious to prevent further disturbance, and having far

more consideration for the profane young men than they deserved, the good priest ordered the bearers to convey the bier quickly into the church, and they accomplished their task without further interruption.

Scarcely, however, had the bier passed through the door of the sacred edifice, than a hawker appeared on the place, calling out the last ordinance relating to a new coinage of silver crowns, which were termed in derision "les enfants morts nés."

On hearing this, De Horn and the others went up to the hawker, and each procuring a copy of the arrêt, they marched towards the church, followed by the crowd, who were curious to see what would ensue. Luckily for himself at this juncture, the Duc d'Aremberg fell down in a state of drunken insensibility, and was carried off by the lacqueys.

On entering the church, De Horn and the two others remained standing quietly in one of the aisles, until the priests and choristers commenced the requiem, when they came forward and chanted in a loud voice the title and terms of the decree. Such irreverence was not to be endured. The service was instantly stopped, and an end was put to the scandal by the appearance of the archers of the grande-prévôté, by whom the offenders were taken into custody, and brought before M. de Machault, the lieutenant-general of police. By him they were sent to the Bastille.

When particulars of the occurrence were related to the Regent, he laughed heartily, but Law, who was with him at the time, shook his head, and said it was a sinister event, and looked like a presage of some dire catastrophe.

"Bah! you are annoyed because they sang a requiem over 'les enfants morts nés,' as the Mississippians call your new écus," laughed the Regent. "A week at the Bastille will be punishment enough for the offence."

The Regent's injunctions were of course obeyed, and after a week's confinement the prisoners were liberated.

III.

M. DE MACHAULT.

ABOUT this time the public were greatly alarmed by a series of crimes, the perpetrators of which could not be discovered. The frequency and extraordinary nature of these crimes created the utmost consternation among the wealthy brokers and jobbers, and representations having been made to Law, he sent for M. de Machault, lieutenant-general of police, to confer with him on the subject.

"No doubt some terrible crimes have lately been committed, monseigneur," said the lieutenant-general, in reply to Law's inquiries, "and the perpetrators have hitherto baffled our vigilance, but as we shall redouble our efforts, they cannot escape us long. Last night a dreadful deed was committed, of which you may not have heard. A certain Madame Dupin received yesterday three hundred thousand livres in billets de banque from M. Tourton, the banker in the Rue Quincampoix. Nothing more was heard of her till this morning, when at an early hour a hired carriage was found by the watch, upset, and without horses or driver, near the walls of the Temple. On searching the vehicle, the watch discovered, to their horror, a sack filled with the mutilated body of a woman. It was completely hacked in pieces. I have since ascertained that the victim was Madame Dupin. This crime corresponds with another, perpetrated only a few days ago, showing that the same hand has been at work in both cases. General Bragousse sent his valet to a broker in the Rue Quincampoix to negotiate a hundred thousand shares. The man disappeared, and the general believed he had decamped with the money. But it was not so. The body of the unfortunate valet was found, hacked in pieces, beneath the Pont Royal. That many other crimes of a similar nature must have been committed, is certain,

since a quantity of legs and arms, with other fragments of persons who have been assassinated, have been dragged out of the Seine. Corpses are found daily in the river, but it is difficult to tell whether the unfortunates have committed suicide or died by violence."

"A frightful state of things," remarked Law. "Public safety requires that these assassins should be discovered, and a terrible example made of them."

"All suspected persons are carefully watched," replied Machault, "and I have no doubt we shall secure the miscreants before long. We are aware that the notorious Cartouche is now in Paris, and these audacious crimes seem traceable to him. But society is shockingly demoralised. Robberies are constantly being committed by young libertines of good family. Many of these brigands have been arrested, but their places are quickly filled up by others. At this moment, were we to go to the Rue Quincampoix, I could point out to you a hundred richly-dressed galliards, apparently young men of fashion, who are really cheats and pickpockets."

"The street must be cleared of such villains, or it will not be safe to do business within it," observed Law.

"I intend to clear it," replied the lieutenant-general. "But I do not wish to cause alarm. I may mention to you, monseigneur, that an atrocious design has been conceived by these libertines, which, were it put into execution, would astound all Paris. It is this. They have planned to form themselves into bands—each band to have a leader. Their design is to secure the guard stationed at the gates of the Rue Quincampoix, and then, sword in hand, fall upon the stock-jobbers, and rifle them of their porte-feuilles. In this way, they calculate upon an immense booty."

"I trust they will not have an opportunity of executing the atrocious design," observed Law.

"Fear nothing, monseigneur. The contrivers of the scheme are under surveillance. You may remember that the Comte de Horn, with Captain de Mille and the Chevalier d'Etampes, were sent to the Bastille for interrupting the interment of the procureur Nigon."

"I perfectly recollect the scandalous occurrence," replied Law. "But what of those young men? Surely they are not implicated in the criminal design you have alluded to?"

"I have reason to believe the plan was contrived by one of them," replied Machault. "They have just been liberated from the Bastille, but I suspect it will not be long before they are sent back again."

"Strict watch ought to be kept over them," said Law. "There never was a time when it was more necessary for the police to be vigilant than at present."

"You shall have no cause for complaint, monseigneur," returned the lieutenant-general. "If any further discoveries are made, I will not fail to report them to you."

So saying, he bowed and took his leave.

IV.

M. LACROIX.

On their liberation from the Bastille, the Comte de Horn and his companions proceeded to the Fair of Saint-Germain, where they indulged themselves in a revel which nearly exhausted their funds. On examining their portefeuilles next morning, they found they had only a few hundred livres left. Worse than all, they owed a large bill to the landlord of the Hôtel de Flandre, where they lodged, and he threatened them with imprisonment if it was not paid. In this emergency, De Mille again undertook to supply them with funds, and at once proceeded to the Hôtel Mazarin, where he found his father in a bureau with several clerks.

"Permit me a word with you in private, M. Laborde," he said.

"I am busy, sir, and cannot attend to you," returned his father, scarcely noticing him. "Come at some other time."

"My business cannot be delayed," returned De Mille. "I have something important to say to you."

Thinking it might be difficult to get rid of him without a scene, which he was anxious, if possible, to avoid, Laborde, with evident reluctance, led the way to an inner room.

"Now, sir, what is it?" he demanded, closing the door. "The old story, eh?—money!"

"Ay, money, father," replied De Mille. "I am in a terrible fix, or I wouldn't apply to you. Give me a hundred thousand livres, and dictate your own terms. Bid me leave Paris, and I go."

"I have no reliance whatever on your promises, sir, and, apparently, you pay little heed to what I say to you. I have told you I will give you no more money, and I do not mean to break my word."

"Then I shall commit some desperate action, and you will be responsible for it."

"That threat does not trouble me," rejoined Laborde. "I care not what becomes of you."

"But you care for your own reputation. If I am driven to crime, you will be dishonoured. You are rich, and won't feel the loss of the paltry sum I ask of you. It will profit you more to save your son from ruin than to accumulate wealth in your coffers."

"I am not to be moved by either supplication or threats," rejoined his father, sternly. "You shall have no further assistance from me."

"Is this your determination, sir?" said De Mille, regarding him fiercely.

"It is my fixed determination," rejoined Laborde.

"Very well, then," said his son. "When you next hear of me, you may, perhaps, regret it."

And he quitted the room.

Scarcely was he gone, than his father, struck by his manner, relented, and followed him, with the intention of calling him back. But he had already quitted the bureau. While Laborde was reflecting upon the course he ought to take, he cast his eyes upon a respectable-

looking, middle-aged man, who was seated in the bureau. This was a broker named Lacroix. At the sight of him an idea occurred to Laborde.

"M. Lacroix," he said, "did you notice the person who has just gone out?"

"I did, sir," replied Lacroix. "It is Captain de Mille. I have often seen him with the Comte de Horn and the Chevalier d'Etampes in the Rue Quincampoix."

"Step into my room for a moment," said Laborde. And, as the broker followed him into the chamber, he shut the door, and went on: "I have something for you to do, Lacroix. It is a delicate task that I desire you to fulfil. Between ourselves, Captain de Mille is in difficulties, and I want to aid him, though I do not wish to appear in the matter. Take this porte-feuille. It contains a hundred and fifty thousand livres in billets de banque. Go to the Rue Quincampoix, and, if you see Captain de Mille, accost him, and inquire if he has any actions to sell. I know he has none, but he will, no doubt, procure the shares from some other broker. But mind this. He is to make five thousand livres by the transaction. You understand?"

"Perfectly, sir," replied Lacroix. "And I will faithfully carry out your instructions."

And he departed on his errand. In about an hour, he returned to inform his employer that he had been successful.

"I have seen Captain de Mille and his friends," he said, "and all has gone as you would have it. They have agreed to sell me twenty-five shares. I am to meet them to-morrow morning at seven o'clock at the Epée de Bois, in the Ruelle de Venise, to conclude the affair."

"You have managed it excellently," replied Laborde. "But don't forget my instructions. Calculate the price so that Captain de Mille can make five thousand livres."

"It shall be done," replied Lacroix.

V.

THE EPÉE DE BOIS.

"CHANCE seems to have thrown the very man we want into our hands," said De Mille to his friends, after Lacroix had left them. "We must get possession of his porte-feuille to-morrow morning."

"I am ready for anything," said De Horn.

"And so am I," said D'Etampes. "But let us talk the matter over before we decide. It is useless to commit a crime if it can be avoided."

"Meantime, let us have something to drink," said De Horn.

This being agreed to, they entered the Hôtel de Louisiane and called for a bottle of cognac, which being set before them by Rossignol, they each swallowed a large glass of the spirit.

"Now," said De Mille, "we can look our position fairly in the face. I have already explained to you that I have failed to obtain money in the quarter I expected. We can only muster three hundred livres amongst us, barely sufficient for our expenses to-night. To-morrow, we shall be without a sou."

"Unless my brother, Prince Maximilien, to whom I have written in very urgent terms, should send me a remittance," remarked the Comte de Horn; "but I confess I don't expect it."

"At all events, it won't do to calculate upon the chance," said De Mille. "We cannot afford to wait. Unless we can pay a hundred thousand livres to the landlord of our hotel to-morrow, we shall be clapped in prison, that is certain. We must have the money."

"We are all agreed upon that point," said De Horn. "But how?"

"Take another glass of brandy," replied De Mille,

filling the count's glass, "and I'll tell you. To-morrow morning we must take that man's portfolio from him."

"But he is not likely to yield it up without a struggle," remarked De Horn.

"We must prevent the struggle—poniard him, and then take his porte-feuille."

"I am not squeamish," said D'Etampes. "I don't mind robbing the man, but assassination is not to my taste."

"What say you, De Horn?" demanded De Mille. "Do you agree to the plan?"

"I do," replied the count. "D'Etampes can keep watch outside the room while the deed is done. Have you a poniard, De Mille?"

"No," replied the other. "Let us go and procure weapons. There is a cutler on the Pont-Neuf who will serve our turn. On the way, we can talk over the plan."

Proceeding to the Pont-Neuf, they procured the weapons they required; after which they went to the Fair of Saint-Germain, where they passed the night in riot, till, overcome by their potations, they fell asleep in their chairs. Well would it have been if they could have slept on, but at an early hour De Mille shook off his slumbers, and, rousing De Horn, said to him, in a low voice:

"It is nearly six o'clock. Our appointment is for seven. If we are not punctual, we may lose our man."

"I thought the deed was done," replied De Horn, with a ghastly look. "I have been dreaming of a dreadful struggle."

"You have had a nightmare, that is all," rejoined De Mille.

And he then proceeded to waken D'Etampes.

"I wish you would leave me out of the business," said the latter, shuddering. "My courage fails me. I like the job less than ever, now."

"No, you must go with us," said De Mille, suspiciously. "Be yourself, and shake off this irresolution. The affair will soon be settled. Have you got your poniard?" he added, in a low voice, to De Horn.

"Ay, it is here," replied the other, touching his vest.

Sallying forth, they shaped their course to the Pont-Neuf, which they crossed, and then proceeding along the Quai de la Mégisserie, entered the Rue Saint Dénis.

By this time, the Comte de Horn and De Mille, whose nerves were of iron, had shaken off the effects of their nocturnal debauch, and marched along with vigorous step; but D'Etampes walked with unsteady gait, and his companions had frequently to stop for him. Though the appearance of all three betokened the disorders in which they had been indulging, there was nothing in the circumstance to excite surprise, since there were many other young men in the streets of equally dissolute look.

Turning into the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, they passed through the grille, which had not been long opened, and entered the Rue Quincampoix.

Even at this early hour there were a good many persons in the street, and business had already commenced. Several brokers addressed the young men, offering them shares, but they took no heed, and, passing on, soon reached the Ruelle de Venise.

At the farther end of this blind alley, now known as the Impasse de Venise, stood the Epée de Bois, a third-rate cabaret, very inferior to the taverns in the Rue Quincampoix, and only frequented by the lower order of Mississippians. De Mille had selected it as a place of rendezvous, because neither he nor his associates were known at the house.

Plunging into the alley, where there was no crowd to impede their progress, they soon reached the Epée de Bois, but Lacroix had not yet arrived.

Two persons, however, were standing at the door of the cabaret, and in these they recognised the Irishmen whom they had fleeced some months before. The rencontre was by no means agreeable, but they made the best of it, and returned the salutations addressed to them by the Hibernians, whose appearance betokened a decided change of fortune for the worse. By this time the Irishmen had managed to acquire a sufficient knowledge of the French

language to make themselves understood, and they were exchanging a few words with De Horn and the others, when Lacroix was seen coming down the alley. On this, De Mille went to meet him.

"I hope I have not kept you waiting, sir?" said Lacroix.

"Pray make no apologies, sir," replied De Mille. "We are rather before our time. But let us go into the house, and settle our affair."

"Willingly, sir," replied Lacroix. "I am all ready for you."

"I hope you haven't forgotten your porte-feuille, M. Lacroix," remarked De Mille, forcing a laugh.

"Rest easy, sir; it is here," replied Lacroix, touching his breast.

They then entered the cabaret, and summoning the garçon, De Mille ordered a private room. As the garçon was conducting them to a chamber on the first floor, they again encountered the Irishmen, who told them they were lodging in the cabaret, on the second floor, and should be happy to see them when they had done their business. Internally execrating them, De Mille promised to come up to their room, and to his great relief they went away.

The party were then shown into a meanly-furnished chamber by the garçon, when De Horn addressed him thus: "We have an important negotiation to arrange with this gentleman, and do not desire to be interrupted. Prepare a good breakfast—a very good breakfast, d'ye hear, garçon? but don't serve it till we ring the bell."

"Monsieur may depend he shall have an excellent déjeûner," replied the garçon.

"Mind!" cried De Mille, "we are on no account to be interrupted."

The garçon nodded, and as soon as he was gone, Lacroix began to make calculations upon a piece of paper.

At a sign from De Mille, D'Etampes then quitted the room, and stationed himself on the stairs outside the door.

The moment for action had now arrived, and the assassins, who had been closely watching their victim, approached him.

"I see you are making your calculations, M. Lacroix," said De Mille. "Have you sufficient funds to pay us for twenty-five shares at sixteen thousand livres each?"

"I will tell you in a moment," said Lacroix. "I have a proposition to make to you in reference to the shares, which I am persuaded will meet with your approval. But first allow me to finish my calculation."

While he was thus occupied, De Mille leaned over his shoulder, and suddenly seizing the two corners of the cloth with which the table was covered, twisted the linen round the head of Lacroix so tightly as to prevent him crying out, while at the same moment De Horn, who was standing near, poniard in hand, plunged the weapon three or four times into the breast of the unfortunate man.

Notwithstanding all the efforts of the assassins to stifle the cries of their wretched victim, they could not prevent the escape of some fearful groans. These appalling sounds, coupled with the trampling of feet and the fall of several articles upset in the desperate struggle, reached the ears of Terry, who was in the room above, and listening attentively, he became convinced that some terrible deed was being enacted.

"Whist! Pat," he cried to his companion, who was changing a portion of his attire in an inner chamber. "D'ye hear them groans? As shure as the world, there's murder goin' on in the room beneath us."

"Murder is it?" cried Pat, presenting himself at the door of communication between the rooms. "By my troth, that did sound very like a groan."

"Clap your ear to the plank, as I'm doin', and ye'll be quite sartin ov it," said Terry. "Saints presarve us! somebody's kilt," he added, as the sound of a heavy body falling on the floor was distinctly heard.

"Out wid ye, Terry! and see wot's the matter," cried Pat. "Alarm the house. I'll be wid ye in a twinklin'."

Terry did not require a second bidding, but rushed out. On reaching the stairs, he perceived D'Etampes standing as sentinel at the door of the chamber in which the foul deed was being enacted. The blanched features

and attitude of the wretch excited Terry's suspicions, and he determined to seize him. D'Etampes, however, did not wait for the other's approach, but, feeling certain that the alarm would be instantly given, hurried down stairs, and made good his retreat. Instead of following him, Terry stopped at the door of the fatal chamber, and peering through a crevice in it, beheld a sight that froze the blood in his veins.

The body of the unfortunate Lacroix was lying on the floor bathed in blood. Beside it stood De Horn, who was cleansing his poniard from its ruddy stains with a napkin, ever and anon glancing at his prostrate victim. De Mille, who seemed almost unconcerned at the atrocious deed, had possessed himself of the porte-feuille, and was feasting his greedy eyes with its contents. Little did he think that the porte-feuille was from his own father, and might have been obtained without bloodshed.

So horrified was Terry by the dreadful spectacle that met his gaze, that for a moment or two he could not stir. Rousing himself at last, he noticed that the key was in the lock, upon which he quickly fastened the door, and then flew down stairs to give the alarm.

The grating of the key in the lock startled the two assassins. Throwing down his poniard, De Horn sprang to the door and found it fastened. At that moment he heard the cry of the Irishman.

"Perdition!" he exclaimed. "The alarm has been given."

Even at this terrible conjuncture, De Mille preserved his coolness, and thrusting the porte-feuille, for which he had bartered his soul, into his breast, rushed to the window and threw it open.

On looking out, he saw that by means of certain projections in the timber of which the house was constructed descent was practicable, and, as luck would have it, there was no one at the moment in that part of the alley.

"Saved!" he cried. "We can get down here."

"Lose not a moment," cried De Horn, who was close behind him. "I hear them on the stairs."

De Mille then got through the window, and being very light and active, quickly reached a browpost, whence he let himself drop to the ground, but in the fall, which was from too great a height, he sprained his ankle severely. De Horn was more fortunate, and reached the ground in safety. Regardless of his companion, who limped after him, De Horn ran towards the Rue Quincampoix, and plunging into the crowd, which by this time had considerably augmented, disappeared.

Meantime, Terry, accompanied by the tavern-keeper and a couple of garçons, burst into the room which the assassins had just quitted. While the others were transfixed by the ghastly spectacle presented to their gaze, Terry rushed to the open window and caught sight of De Mille, who, unable to proceed farther, was seeking refuge in a doorway.

"There's one ov 'em! I see him!" cried Terry. "Come wid me, Pat," he added to his comrade. "We'll have him in less than no time!"

Caught in his retreat by the two Irishmen, De Mille was speedily overpowered, and being dragged back to the cabaret, was taken to the chamber of death and confronted with his victim. It was impossible for him to deny his guilt, and he did not attempt it. The porte-feuille was found upon him, and his laced ruffles and coat-sleeves were stained with blood.

VI.

THE PORTER OF THE HALLE.

MEANTIME, the alarm had been given by the garçons of the cabaret, and in an incredibly short space of time it was known by every one in the Rue Quincampoix that a frightful assassination had been committed by some young men of rank at the Epée de Bois, in the Ruelle de Venise.

The gates at the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher and the Rue-aux-Ours were closed, and no one was allowed by the guard to pass through without strict investigation. But these precautions were taken too late, as far as D'Etampes was concerned. Long before the alarm was given he was out of the Rue Quincampoix, and, springing into a hired coach, drove with all possible expedition to the Hôtel de Flandre, where he secured a few portable effects, and then quitted Paris. Nor was he afterwards taken, but passed the remainder of his days in the Dutch Indies, under the name of Grandpré.

The Comte de Horn managed to elude the vigilance of the corps-de-garde stationed at the grille of the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, but his habiliments being torn, and stained with blood, he did not dare to proceed along the Rue Saint Denis, but hurried towards the Halle, with the intention of entering some obscure cabaret in that quarter.

The market was then at its height, and he might have escaped detection, had not his scared looks and disordered attire attracted the attention of a sturdy porter, who caught hold of him and stopped him.

"Hola, monsieur!" cried this personage, detaining him in his rough gripe. "What's the matter? From the blood upon your shirt and sleeves, I judge you have been engaged in a desperate fray. Have you been fighting with

some of the canaille in the Halle? You look like a person of quality. Can I serve you?"

"I am infinitely obliged to you, my good friend," replied De Horn, terrified by the detention. "I am, as you conjecture, a person of condition. The blood you see upon my dress is my own. I have been set upon by ruffians in a tavern hard by, and deem myself lucky in escaping with life."

"Milles diables!" exclaimed the porter. "This is a case for the commissary of police. Allons, monsieur. I'll conduct you to the office."

"You are very obliging, my friend, but I needn't trouble you to go with me," replied De Horn. "Direct me to the office—that will suffice."

"Bah! it's no trouble at all. The office is close at hand—in the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher. I know M. Regnard, the commissary, very well. I'll introduce you to him."

"But there is no sort of necessity, I tell you," said De Horn, scarcely able to conceal his uneasiness. "If the office is in the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher I can easily find it."

"You had better have me with you, or you will be insulted by the dames de la Halle," rejoined the porter. "Some of 'em, I see, are eyeing you sharply already."

Finding he could not get rid of his tormentor without exciting suspicion, De Horn suffered himself to be conducted to the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, the porter keeping close to his side all the way, so that flight was impossible.

On arriving at the police-office, they were at once ushered into the presence of M. Regnard, the commissary, who listened attentively to De Horn's tale. Before, however, the wretched young man had concluded his recital, a tumult was heard in the outer room, and an officer rushed in to say that a frightful assassination had just been committed at the Epée de Bois, in the Ruelle de Venise, by two young seigneurs, of whom one was taken, but the other had escaped.

"Then this is the man you want!—this is the second assassin!" cried the porter, pointing to De Horn, whose looks and demeanour proclaimed his guilt. "The moment I clapped eyes upon him I said to myself that man is an assassin, and I was determined not to let him go, but to bring him to you, M. le Commissaire. He came quietly enough, I must say; but I would have brought him by force if he had resisted."

"You have done well, Bertrand," said Regnard, approvingly; "and if, as I suspect, this should turn out to be the man, you shall be handsomely rewarded."

"I want no reward for bringing an assassin to justice," replied Bertrand. "I have merely acted like a good citizen."

At a sign from the commissary, two more officers were called in, and De Horn was arrested. On being interrogated, he did not seek to disguise his name and rank, expecting that when he stated that he belonged to the highest ranks of the nobility, that he was the younger brother of a Prince of the Pays Bas, a relative of the Emperor of Germany, of the Princess Palatine, and of the Regent himself, M. Regnard would order his release. But in this expectation he was deceived. The announcement merely let the commissary know that this was one of the young seigneurs about whom he had previously received instructions from his chief, M. de Machault. So he ordered a detachment of archers to be sent for, and as soon as they arrived took the prisoner to the Epée de Bois.

The crowd in the Rue Quincampoix was in an extraordinarily excited and tumultuous state. Execrations and menaces greeted the prisoner as he passed along, and but for the strong guard that surrounded him, he might have fared ill.

The Ruelle de Venise was blocked up, but a passage being cleared through the throng, De Horn was taken into the cabaret, and led to the room in which the body of his victim was still lying. Here he found his guilty associate, who cast one look at him as he was brought in, but not a word passed between them.

of

In the room, seated at the table, and writing notes, was M. de Machault. He had been hastily summoned, and, ever since his arrival, had been occupied in examining the witnesses, the chief of whom were the two Irishmen, the tavern-keeper, and the garçon. By these witnesses De Mille's guilt had already been established, and their evidence in regard to De Horn's participation in the crime was equally conclusive.

The inquiry did not last long. Satisfied of the guilt of both parties, M. de Machault ordered them to be taken to the Grand Châtelet, and they were escorted thither by the archers, the same fearful demonstrations from the crowd accompanying them as had attended De Horn on his way to the Epée de Bois. The prisoners were not allowed to have any discourse together, but were lodged in separate dungeons.

After sending the prisoners to the Grand Châtelet, M. de Machault repaired to the Hôtel Law, where he had an interview with the comptroller-general. He subsequently went to the Palais Royal, to learn the Regent's pleasure respecting the Comte de Horn, and was told that justice must take its course. Shortly afterwards, Law had an audience of the Regent, and in consequence of the comptroller-general's representations, an order was sent by the Regent to the presiding judge of the court of the Grand Châtelet, enjoining that the two assassins, having been taken flagrante delicto, should be brought to trial without delay. In obedience to this mandate, on the very next day the process commenced.

By this time De Horn had fully recovered his confidence, persuading himself that he had interest enough to save him from the penalty of his crime, and, though De Mille did not entertain the same conviction, his natural audacity stood him in good stead, and he betrayed no misgiving as to the result of the trial. In fact, the demeanour of both was marked with so much levity, an they seemed so utterly insensible of the enormity of the offence laid to their charge, as to excite the indignation and reprehension of the court.

After a long and patient examination, they were found

guilty, and sentenced to be broken alive on the wheel in the Place de Grève, on the sixth day from that on which their crime had been committed. This terrible sentence did not produce much effect upon the prisoners, and for the simple reason that neither of them believed it would be carried into effect.

"Don't be cast down," whispered De Horn to his companion in crime. "This is mere form. We are not destined to make a spectacle in the Place de Grève. My friends have promised to obtain us a pardon from the Regent."

They were then removed by the officers in attendance, and taken back to their dungeons.

VII.

HOW THE REGENT REFUSED TO COMMUTE THE COMTE DE HORN'S SENTENCE.

THE assassination of Lacroix created an extraordinary sensation throughout Paris. That such a daring crime could be committed in the open day, in a public cabaret, within a few yards of the crowded Rue Quincampoix, where the cries of the victim might have been heard, filled all the speculators with alarm. Business was almost at a stand-still in the Rue Quincampoix. The brokers were uneasy in their bureaux; the bankers and money-lenders shut up their counters; and the Mississippians did not dare to bring their porte-feuilles with them. Many young men who had been known to associate with De Horn and the others were regarded with suspicion.

Though a crime of this nature was as abhorrent to the feelings of the nobility as to those of all other classes of society, the condemnation of the Comte de Horn to the death of a common felon was felt as a blow to the whole order. Efforts had been made to divert the course of

justice and screen the perpetrators of the crime, but such was the promptitude with which they were brought to trial, that these efforts were defeated. The court had been crowded with persons of the highest rank, and amongst them were the Duc de Chatillon, the Duc d'Aremberg, the Prince de Robecq-Montmorency, and the Maréchal d'Isinghien, all four near relatives of the Comte de Horn, and it was the presence of these personages that made the unfortunate young man so confident of escape. To the proud nobles themselves the sentence passed upon their dishonoured relative was a degradation which they could not brook, and their feelings were shared by the other nobles present. On leaving the court, they held a conference together, and it was resolved that the Prince de Montmorency and the other connexions of the house of Horn should see the Regent without delay, and procure from his highness either the pardon of their unfortunate relative, or a commutation of the sentence.

Their intentions being reported to Law, he obtained an audience of the Regent at an early hour on the following day, and implored his highness not to yield to any solicitations that might be made him to spare the assassins, as the atrocious nature of the crime imperatively demanded that the sentence should be carried out. "The greatest consternation has been caused among all the holders of billets de banque," he said, "and a terrible example must be made of the offenders, to reassure them. Unless the Comte de Horn and his associate are executed, there will no longer be any security for moneyed men in Paris. I pray your highness, therefore, to be inflexible."

"I feel with you," said the Regent. "Such a crime as this must not pass unpunished. I will turn a deaf ear to all the supplications addressed to me—no matter by whom."

Law had not been gone long, when, as had been foreseen, the Prince de Montmorency, the Ducs de Chatillon and D'Aremberg, with the Maréchal d'Isinghien, besought an interview with the Regent, and were at once admitted.

The Regent received them with great consideration, evincing by his manner the sympathy he felt for them.

"We have come," said the Prince de Montmorency, "as supplicants to your highness in behalf of our unhappy kinsman, the Comte de Horn. We do not for a moment attempt to extenuate the crime he has committed. It is of the darkest dye, and deserves the severest punishment. If the consequences fell only upon his own head, we would not interpose between him and justice. Nay, if he were doomed to die by the axe, no word of remonstrance should be heard from us. Two of his ancestors died so. Philippe, Comte de Horn, was beheaded by the Duke of Alva in 1568, and two years later, Comte Floris de Horn was put to death in like manner by Philip II. of Spain. Their deaths brought no dishonour to the house. But if Comte Antoine de Horn should die the felon's death to which he has been adjudged, an ineffaceable stain will be cast on every branch of his illustrious house. There is scarcely a noble family in the Pays Bas but the house of Horn is allied with it. Shall dishonour be brought upon all these houses? Shall it be told to the Comte Maximilien, the proudest and most chivalrous of men, that his brother has been broken on the wheel? Shall it be told to the Emperor of Germany that a member of his royal house has died this shameful death? Even the Princess Palatine and your highness yourself will be touched by it."

"Eh bien!" cried the Regent, "I will share the opprobrium with you all. That ought to be a consolation to the other relatives."

"I cannot believe, monseigneur, that you will inflict this indelible disgrace upon a house so illustrious and so proudly allied," said the Maréchal d'Isinghien. "Your highness may not be aware that if Comte Antoine de Horn should be broken on the wheel, his family will be rendered infamous for three generations. Besides the shame they will have to endure, no male can become an abbé or bishop, no female a canoness. At this very moment the sister of the unhappy Antoine is about to

enter a convent, but she cannot do so if her brother dies this infamous death. For her sake—for the sake of her brother Prince Maximilien—for the sake of us all—commute this miserable young man's sentence to decapitation. I ask no further grace, but I beseech you to save a noble house from dishonour."

"It is not the mode of death that degrades, but the offence," replied the Regent.

"La crime fait la honte, et non pas l'échafaud.

The Comte de Horn has committed a felon's act, and must die a felon's death. I cannot—will not commute his punishment."

"I grieve to hear your highness say so," said the Duc d'Aremberg, sternly. "By this severity you will make enemies of all the nobles of the Pays Bas and Germany, who will feel themselves outraged. The Emperor would have passed no such sentence."

"I will go further than that," said Montmorency, boldly. "The Emperor will be justly indignant that one of his house should be executed like a felon."

"I cannot help his anger," said the Regent, impatiently. "If I make all the nobles of the Pays Bas, and all those of Germany, my mortal foes, I will not pervert justice."

"Your nobility look to you as the guardian of their privileges, monseigneur," said the Duc de Chatillon. "In your hands their honour ought to remain unsullied. You are yielding to the people, who clamour that the high birth of the Comte de Horn will shield him from the consequences of his crime; and the concession you are making will react upon the throne. We know the pressure that has been brought to bear upon your highness. We know that the comptroller-general has stated that an example must be made. But we beseech you to listen to our supplications, not to him. If this ignominious sentence is carried out, be assured we shall never forgive M. Law for the injury inflicted upon us."

"Have you done, messieurs?" demanded the Regent, coldly.

"We have," replied Montmorency, sternly. "And we only regret that we should have troubled your highness at all. We are persuaded you will rue this step."

"I do not think so," returned the Regent. "But I shall not shrink from the consequences, be they what they may. I am sorry I cannot listen to your prayers—that is impossible. But is there any other grace I can show you? Perhaps you may desire to visit your unhappy kinsman in his prison? If so, you shall have permission to do so."

There was a certain significance in the tone in which this proposition was made, that conveyed more than the words implied, and after the supplicants had conferred a moment together, the Prince de Montmorency said:

"The Maréchal d'Isinghien and myself will avail ourselves of your highness's permission to visit the prisoner."

"You will do well," rejoined the Regent. "Perhaps you may be able to reconcile him to his doom."

"We will try," said Montmorency.

And bowing profoundly, the whole party took their departure.

As soon as they were gone, Nocé, who had been standing at the back of the cabinet, came forward.

"Your highness has displayed more firmness than I expected," he remarked.

"I cannot commute De Horn's sentence," replied the Regent. "I would rather displease the nobles than the people. I gave Montmorency a hint, and I hope he will act upon it."

"I am sure he will," said Nocé. "But I doubt whether De Horn has the courage to save himself from this ignominious death. Your highness must admit I am a good physiognomist. I foretold that this young man would come to a violent end."

"I begin to think your prediction will be fulfilled," replied the Regent.

VIII.

HOW THE PRINCE DE MONTMORENCY AND THE MARÉCHAL D'ISINGHIEN HAD AN INTERVIEW WITH THE COMTE DE HORN IN THE GRAND CHATELET.

LATER on in the day, and provided with a warrant from the Regent, the Prince de Montmorency and the Maréchal d'Isinghien repaired to the Grand Châtelet, in the dungeons of which their unhappy kinsman was bestowed.

In these prisons, which were among the strongest in Paris, many tragical events occurred at the time of the League, and during the faction of the Armagnacs. Some of the dungeons were horrible places, as may be inferred from their names—les Chaines, la Fosse, le Puits, les Oubliettes, and les Boucheries. Prisoners were lowered into "le Puits," which was knee-deep in water, in the way that a bucket is let down into a well. In the lowest depths of the Grand Châtelet there was a frightful hole called "Fin d'aise," in which a prisoner could neither stand upright nor sit down. These dungeons were demolished at the commencement of the present century.

But it was not in any of the horrible places just referred to that the Comte de Horn and Captain de Mille were confined. The cells allotted to both were large and airy—that in which De Horn was placed being denominated "le Paradis," while De Mille was lodged in "la Gloriette."

The high rank of the visitors, and the order which they brought from the Regent, ensured them attention from the governor, M. Dartaguiette, who conducted them in person to the dungeon wherein their relative was confined, assuring them it was the best in the Châtelet, and as good as any chamber in the Bastille. After ushering them into the cell, M. Dartaguiette retired and left them alone with the prisoner—placing a gaoler outside the door. On their entrance, De Horn, who was seated at a little table,

started joyfully to his feet, but their looks struck him with dismay.

"Have you brought me a pardon?" he inquired.

"You must prepare for the worst," replied Montmorency. "The Regent is inexorable. We have not asked for a pardon, but merely for a commutation of your sentence to death by the axe. But this his highness refuses."

"Must I, then, die?" almost shrieked De Horn.

"Undoubtedly," rejoined D'Isinghien. "And, what is more, you deserve death."

"Ah! you have been false to me!" cried De Horn. "You have not besought the Regent to spare me, but to put me to death. You are traitors. But I will find others who will reach his highness."

"Do not delude yourself by the idle expectation," said Montmorency, sternly. "I tell you the Regent is inexorable. You have committed an atrocious crime, for which you deserve the death to which you are adjudged, and it is only because the manner of your execution will bring infamy upon the prince your brother, upon the princess your sister, and upon all connected with your house, that we have interceded for you."

For a few minutes De Horn covered his face with his hands, and remained speechless. With quivering lips, and in broken accents, he then cried,

"Save me!—oh, save me from this infamous death!"

"There is only this means of escape," rejoined Montmorency, giving him a small phial.

"What is this?" cried De Horn. "Poison?"

"Drain that phial, and you will escape an ignominious death, and save your family from infamy," said D'Isinghien. "Our errand is done."

"Stay!" cried De Horn. "Take back the phial. I will not die thus. I distrust you. You want to get rid of me. The Regent will never allow his own kinsman to be executed."

"Indulge no such hope," rejoined Montmorency. "Your fate is the wheel, unless you avoid it by the means we have just offered you."

"I cannot do it!" cried De Horn, thrusting the phial into Montmorency's hands.

"What!" exclaimed the prince, contemptuously. "Are you of such a craven nature that you fear death? Would you bring infamy upon your illustrious house and all its connexions? Shame on you!—shame on you!"

"But I shall not die!" cried the miserable young man. "The Regent will pardon me."

"Madman! you have no alternative but poison or a felon's death!" rejoined Montmorency. "Since you elect the latter, we have no further business here. You will not see us again."

And he turned his back upon him.

"You are the reproach of a noble race, and are only worthy to die upon the wheel," cried D'Isinghien, regarding him with abhorrence.

Then, calling to the gaoler to open the door, they quitted the cell, leaving De Horn completely prostrated.

IX.

OF THE LAST INTERVIEW BETWEEN LABORDE AND HIS SON.

TERRIBLE was the effect produced upon Laborde by the intelligence that Lacroix had been barbarously assassinated. How could he do otherwise than charge himself with being the cause of the unfortunate man's destruction! A fit seized him, and he fell down insensible. Medical assistance being quickly procured by old Delmace, who was with him at the time, and who, in fact, had brought him the dreadful news, Laborde was saved from the consequences of the attack, but for two days his life was despaired of, and, during the whole of that time, he continued delirious.

On the morning of the third day an improvement took place. Having slept for a few hours, he awoke refreshed,

and the cloud that had obscured his mind had partially cleared away. The first object his gaze rested upon was his daughter, who was seated by his couch, watching over him, while at a little distance stood old Delmace. Though Laborde's faculties were still in a confused state, he was sensible that a great change had taken place in Colombe's looks, and that her countenance bore traces of deep mental anguish.

"What is the matter with you, my child?" he inquired, in feeble tones. "What has happened?"

"Do not ask me, father," she rejoined. "You have been ill. Do you feel better?"

"Yes, I am better—much better," he rejoined. "But my head is still bewildered. I know some dire calamity has occurred. Don't keep it from me."

Colombe made no reply, but turned away to hide her tears. All at once the dreadful truth rushed upon Laborde, and, raising himself, he called out, in a voice that terrified both his daughter and old Delmace, the latter of whom rushed towards the bed.

"Your precautions are in vain. The fiends are yelling in my ears that I am the father of an assassin."

"Be calm, sir—be calm, I implore you," said Delmace, with difficulty restraining him. "For your daughter's sake be calm. You know not what she has endured. Be thankful to Heaven, sir, that if you have an evil son, who has caused you nothing but grief and shame, you have the best of daughters. Mademoiselle Colombe is an angel. She has been watching by you for two whole days and nights—ever since your attack."

"You are right, Delmace," said Laborde, upon whom his old servant's words produced an instantaneous effect; "Colombe is an angel of goodness, and I ought to be grateful to Heaven for bestowing such a daughter upon me. I have treated you unkindly, my child," he added, taking her hand, "but if I am spared, I will make amends."

"Oh! do not think of me, dear father," she said. "Guilty as Raoul is, you must still think of him. Are

you able to bear the afflicting news I have to tell you?"

"I am," replied Laborde. "I would rather hear the worst, however painful it may be, than be kept in suspense. Does my wretched son yet live?"

"He does," replied Colombe; "but he has been tried, and condemned to—to——" She could not finish the sentence.

"He is doomed to be broken on the wheel," supplied Delmace. "Three days hence the terrible sentence will be carried into effect at the Place de Grève."

"Horror!" exclaimed Laborde, sinking back upon his couch with a groan.

"You have said too much, Delmace," cried Colombe, reproachfully. "You have killed him by this intelligence."

"Oh! no, no. I can bear it," said Laborde. "I myself am not free from guilt in this dreadful affair."

"You, father—impossible!" exclaimed Colombe.

"Your brain is wandering, sir," said Delmace.

"No, my mind is clear enough now," rejoined Laborde. "I tell you that I have been unwittingly instrumental in causing the assassination of poor Lacroix. I sent him to assist Raoul, and it was in executing my orders that he met his terrible fate."

"This is indeed a sad and strange complication of the affair," said Colombe, "but you need not reproach yourself for an act that was intended for the best. It may be a consolation to you to know that Raoul was tried under his assumed name of Laurent de Mille, and has not been recognised as your son."

"For me it matters not," rejoined Laborde. "I cannot hide from myself the consciousness that I am the father of an assassin. I can never hold up my head again. But with you, Colombe, the case is different; and on your account I rejoice that no discovery has been made."

"I have deemed it right to impart the terrible truth to M. Law and Lady Catherine," said Colombe. "And I need not tell you, you have their profound commiseration."

"For your sake, Colombe, I wish the truth could have been concealed even from them," cried Laborde.

"I have done with the world, father," she rejoined. "I shall hide my woes in a convent."

"No, no—not so," he rejoined. "I am rich. You shall marry Evelyn, and be happy."

"That cannot be now, father," she rejoined, sadly.

At this moment a tap was heard at the door, and the summons being answered by Delmace, the old man presently returned to say that M. Law was in the outer room.

"Shall I go to him, father?" asked Colombe.

"No; beg him to come in," said Laborde to Delmace. "I am quite strong enough to see him."

On his entrance, Law took the chair which Colombe ceded to him by her father's bedside, and expressed the profound sympathy he felt for the unfortunate man, adding, "I would urge you, if you feel equal to the effort, at once to leave Paris, and go to my château of Guermande, where you can remain till you are perfectly recovered. My carriage shall convey you thither. Be advised by me, and go," he continued, seeing that Laborde hesitated. "Guermande, as you know, is only a few leagues from Paris, so that the journey will not fatigue you much. You will be better out of the way. Colombe," he added to her, "you must prepare your father for immediate departure."

"I will obey you, sir," replied Laborde. "I feel it is for the best—but I must see my unfortunate son before I go."

"On no account," said Law. "The interview will answer no good purpose, and will only give you unnecessary pain."

"I am his father, monseigneur," replied Laborde, "and, though he has caused me inconceivable misery, I cannot shut my heart to him. I know the enormity of his crime—I know he does not deserve mercy—but is there any hope for him?"

"None whatever," replied Law. "The sentence will

infallibly be carried out. Therefore I urge you, for your own sake, and for your daughter's sake, to depart at once for Guermande, and not subject yourself to a needless trial of your feelings. Why do you not dissuade your father from the hazardous design, Colombe?"

"Because I think he ought to see my unhappy brother," she rejoined. "I will go with him to the prison."

Finding nothing less would content them, Law yielded, and said, "In an hour my carriage shall be here, and shall take you to the Grand Châtelet. I will send you an order for admittance to the prisoner. After you have had the interview you desire, you can proceed at once to Guermande, where I hope you will spend a few weeks."

"I do not think I have many weeks to live, monseigneur," replied Laborde; "but I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your consideration."

Pressing poor Laborde's hand kindly, Law then quitted the room.

In an hour, as arranged, the carriage arrived, and Laborde and his daughter being ready, they entered it, and were driven to the Grand Châtelet, where the order sent them, according to his promise, by Law, procured them immediate admittance to the prisoner.

On their entrance into his celi, which was nearly as large as that assigned to his wretched associate, De Mille, as we shall still continue to call him, manifested some discomposure, but almost immediately recovered his self-possession.

Poor Laborde, however, was so overcome by the sight of his son, that he sank down upon the only seat which the cell contained, and for some moments could not utter a word.

"I hope you will pass the few days left you on earth in penitence and prayer, Raoul," said Colombe, "and seek to obtain pardon from your Supreme Judge. Begin by imploring forgiveness from your father, whom you have so deeply afflicted."

"I cannot bend the knee to any man now," rejoined

De Mille, stubbornly. "But my father is the cause of this catastrophe. If he had given me the money I asked for, it would not have happened."

"I had a good motive for the refusal," replied Laborde, "but it was my intention to let you have the money. Learn, miserable wretch, that the unfortunate Lacroix, whom you so ruthlessly slew, was my agent, and charged by me to give you money. The porte-feuille you snatched from him was mine—ay, mine! If you had waited a few minutes, you would have been spared this dreadful crime."

"I suppose I must believe what you tell me," replied his son, surprised by the information. "But how was I to guess that Lacroix was your agent? You should not have adopted this roundabout mode of assisting me. If you had given me the money at once, I should not now be here."

"Oh, Raoul! how shocked I am to find you in this impenitent condition," cried Colombe. "If you harden your heart thus, you will perish everlastingly."

"I am no hypocrite, Colombe," replied her brother, "and I will not feign a penitence I do not—cannot feel. I don't like to die. Life is sweet; and if my career were not cut short in this merciless manner, I might enjoy many years of pleasure."

"Pleasure!—always pleasure!" cried Colombe. "It is your insatiate love of pleasure that has destroyed you."

"Life is worth nothing without enjoyment," rejoined her brother. "I don't fear death. But the wheel is a horrible punishment. I have always been vain of my limbs, and don't desire to have them shattered. Have you brought me anything, Colombe?"

"Here is a devout book, which I pray you to peruse," she replied, giving him a small volume. "It will afford you consolation."

"I don't want that," he replied, tossing it aside disdainfully. Then, drawing near to her, he added, in a low voice, "Have you brought me anything to enable me to avoid the wheel?"

"No," she replied, shuddering. "Do you think I would furnish you with the means of self-destruction?"

"Why not?" he rejoined, almost fiercely. "It would be the kindest thing you could do for me. I would have thanked you if you had enabled me to avoid that horrible wheel. But since you have come empty-handed, you might have spared me the visit."

"Father, let us go," said Colombe. "We shall do no good here."

"Oh! my son! my son!" cried Laborde, in a voice of anguish. "I call upon you, at this supreme moment, to repent—so that you may yet be forgiven."

"Will not those cries move you?" said Colombe.

"No," replied her brother. "I will die as I have lived."

Laborde gazed at him for some moments in speechless anguish, but finding there were no signs of yielding, he called to the gaoler, and quitted the cell with his daughter.

"M. Law was right," he observed to Colombe. "I ought to have avoided this interview."

In less than three hours afterwards Laborde and his daughter arrived at the splendid Château de Guermande, near Lagny. But no new day dawned upon the unfortunate man. The interview with his guilty son had been too much for him. He had another fit that night, and expired in his daughter's arms.

X.

THE CURÉ DE SAINT PAUL.

THE hope of a pardon, to which the unhappy Comte de Horn obstinately clung, despite what had been said to him by his two noble kinsmen, was at last dispelled by Père Gueret, Curé de Saint Paul, who visited him in his cell on the afternoon of the following day.

"Your doom is sealed, my son," said the curé to him. "You have not many hours to live. Make the most, therefore, of the little time left you on earth. By full confession of your sins, by heartfelt penitence, and by earnest supplication, you may obtain forgiveness of Heaven. But there is no longer any hope for you on earth."

For some time the wretched young man was in a state of great excitement, refusing to listen to Père Gueret's exhortations, but at last, becoming calmer, he knelt down, and made his shrift, professing such profound contrition for his offences, that the good curé could not refuse him absolution.

Much comforted, De Horn then said to the priest,

"I deserve to die on the wheel, but I hope, out of consideration for my noble family, that the Regent, in his goodness, will accord me a less dishonourable death."

"I can hold out no hopes for you, my son," replied Père Gueret. "M. Law told me this morning that the Regent is inexorable. You must, therefore, resign yourself to your doom."

At the words, a mortal sickness seized De Horn. Alarmed by his appearance, the good curé aided him to a seat, and was about to summon the gaoler, when the prisoner stopped him, saying,

"It is only a momentary faintness. It will pass."

Damps broke out upon his brow, and relieved him, but his face was deadly white, and his very lips were bloodless.

"Tell me, good father," he gasped, fixing a haggard look upon the curé, "does one suffer much on the wheel?"

The curé regarded him compassionately, scarcely knowing how to reply, but at last said,

"If you are sincerely penitent, my son, Heaven will strengthen you to endure the pain. The penitent thief who suffered with our blessed Lord was supported on the cross. Call upon the blessed saints and martyrs in the hour of agony, and I doubt not you will be sustained. I shall be near you to the last, and will not cease to pray for your speedy deliverance."

With this the good man quitted the cell, and proceeded to that of De Mille, with whom, however, he was less successful than he had been with the other prisoner. De Mille refused all spiritual assistance. At last the curé, incensed by his obstinacy, exclaimed,

"Miserable wretch! You will die unabsolved, and your soul will remain ever in torment. Very different from your conduct is that of the partner of your guilt. He has made his peace with Heaven."

"What! has the Comte de Horn surrendered himself into the hands of a priest?" cried De Mille, with a derisive laugh. "I did not deem him capable of such weakness."

"His weakness, as you profanely call it, will profit him more than your obstinacy," said the curé. "But, hardened as you are, I trust that your heart may yet be touched. I will pray that it may be so."

XI.

HOW A CHANGE WAS WROUGHT IN DE MILLE.

PÈRE GUERET had not long quitted the cell, when another person was introduced by the gaoler, who retired and left him with the prisoner. The new comer was Evelyn Harcourt.

"What brings you here, sir?" demanded De Mille, in a stern voice. "Do you come to mock me, or to gratify an idle curiosity?"

"I come at the instance of your afflicted sister," replied Evelyn.

"What sister?" cried De Mille, almost fiercely. "I have none. And if I had, I do not see what right you have to meddle with me and my family."

"The prevarication will answer no purpose," said Evelyn. "I know the truth. It is only at your sister's request that I have consented to come here. I bring news of your father."

"If you persist in calling Laborde my father, I cannot help it," rejoined De Mille. "But I acknowledge no relationship to him."

"The disclaimer is useless," said Evelyn. "Colombe has told me all."

"I am sorry for it," rejoined De Mille. "You are the very last person to whom the secret should have been confided. I hoped it might die with me, and then no harm would have been done to my family. But what news do you bring of my father?"

"Prepare yourself," said Evelyn, in a solemn voice. "He is dead."

"Dead!" almost shrieked De Mille. "Then I am a parricide. Oh, Heaven! the measure of my iniquities would not have been complete without this heinous crime."

"I will not disguise from you that the shock you have

given your father has killed him," said Evelyn. "He died last night in the arms of his daughter, at the Château de Guermande, whence I have just returned."

"I am, indeed, a wretch unworthy to live," cried De Mille, horror-stricken. "Père Gueret told me just now that my heart would be touched—and so it is. I see the hand of Heaven in this. I now comprehend the magnitude of my offences, and will repent of them. But there is no hope for such a sinner as I am."

"There is always hope," said Evelyn. "Your father forgave you with his dying lips, and will intercede for you at the throne of Mercy. Make your peace with Heaven."

"I will strive to do so," rejoined the other, in broken accents. "Oh, Evelyn! I have been fatal to my family. My poor mother's heart was broken by my reckless conduct, and now I have destroyed my father. But let me not destroy Colombe. Do not cease to love her because she is my sister. No two human beings were ever more unlike in character than she and I—she all goodness—I the incarnation of evil. If I had listened to her admonitions I should not be here now—sullied by crime and filled with remorse. Forget, if you can, that such a wretch as Raoul Laborde ever existed, and let my name never be mentioned between you and Colombe. Say you will continue to love her, Evelyn. She will die if you abandon her."

"Fear nothing," replied Evelyn. "All the trials Colombe has endured have only tended to exalt her character in my eyes, and strengthen my affection for her."

"Oh! thanks for that assurance," cried De Mille. "Certain that the fatal influence I have exercised over both my parents will not attach to Colombe—certain she will be happy—I shall die content. Tell Colombe that her image will enable me to bear my punishment without a groan, and that my latest thoughts will be hers. And now farewell for ever, Evelyn! When you go forth, I pray you send Père Gueret to me. He will find me an altered man."

"It will console your sister in her deep affliction to hear of this change in you," said Evelyn. "Be assured she will not forget you in her prayers. Farewell for ever!"

And he quitted the cell.

Shortly afterwards Père Gueret again made his appearance. De Mille threw himself humbly and penitently at his feet, cleansed his bosom of its heavy load, and received absolution.

XII.

THE PLACE DE GRÈVE.

THE day of execution arrived.

A vast concourse had assembled in the Place de Grève, where preparations had been made for the tragical drama about to be enacted. A large scaffold, draped with black, had been erected on the side of the place nearest the Hôtel de Ville; and on this scaffold were the two hideous machines to which the sufferers were to be attached. The dismal structure was guarded by a body of archers in their full equipments. The windows of every habitation commanding a view of the Place de Grève were filled with spectators, and in front of the Hôtel de Ville was ranged a long line of carriages, sent thither by the noble relatives of the Comte de Horn; the coachmen and footmen being in mourning, as if they were in attendance upon a funeral. This was the only recognition of his rank shown to the unhappy young man. A guard of mounted mousquetaires, placed in front of the carriages, protected them from the crowd.

The patience of the amateurs of sanguinary exhibitions worthy of ancient Rome was severely tried. They had to wait many hours. It was not until nearly four o'clock in the afternoon that a dull roar proceeding from the throng

on the Pont Notre-Dame announced that the gloomy cortége had set forth from the Grand Châtelet.

The previous tedium was then forgotten, and all eyes were turned towards the bridge, over which a large body of archers, numbering as many as two hundred, was presently seen to advance, but at a very slow pace. In the midst of this unusually strong escort, were two charrettes, each drawn by four horses. In the foremost of the cars, with his back to the horses, sat the Comte de Horn—a long black cloak completely shrouding his person, which had been almost stripped of its attire, in preparation for the dreadful punishment he had to undergo. The deathly pallor of his features was heightened by the sombre hue of the cloak, and his looks showed that he was appalled by the frightful yells and execrations addressed to him by the savage spectators. Once or twice he stole a glance at the crowd, but instantly averted his gaze from the fierce and pitiless looks he encountered. Nothing but abhorrence and gratified vengeance was written in the faces he beheld. He tried to pray, but his mouth was parched, and his ashy lips refused their office. His only resource was to fix his eyes steadfastly upon the crucifix held towards him by Père Gueret, who accompanied him in the charrette.

Not such was the demeanour of De Mille, who occupied the hindmost car, and was attended by the chaplain of the Châtelet. Like his wretched associate, he was wrapped in a long black cloak, but the cries by which he was assailed, so far from cowing him, roused all the fierceness of his nature, and glancing defiantly around, he requited the spectators with looks as menacing as their own. At last, stung beyond endurance at the continuous hooting, he rose from his seat, and looked as if about to fling himself, bound as he was, upon his tormentors. The chaplain, however, prevailed upon him to sit down. This display of courage operated in his favour with the mob, and their invectives lessened in fury. After this, De Mille became perfectly cool and collected, and scrutinised the spectators on either side as if in search of some familiar

face. But he perceived none that was known to him, until just as he reached the foot of the bridge his eye alighted upon the two Irishmen. Reproaching himself for the wrong he had done them, he turned away, and was instantly engrossed by other objects.

By this time, the car containing the Comte de Horn had entered the Place de Grève, and a frightful yell arose from the assemblage. This ordeal was perhaps the most terrible that the wretched young man had to endure, and he internally prayed for deliverance. So dense was the crowd, that it was with difficulty that a passage could be forced through it by the archers, and two or three stoppages occurred in consequence. During these unavoidable delays the Comte de Horn suffered indescribable anguish, so that before he reached the place of execution, it might be truly said with him that the bitterness of death had almost passed.

Already half a dozen ominous-looking personages, clad in habiliments of blood-red serge, and having their muscular arms bared to the shoulder, had taken possession of the scaffold, and from that eminence were watching the slow progress of the charrettes through the concourse. These were the two executioners and their aids.

So faint was the Comte de Horn, that, on reaching the spot where he was about to expiate his offences with his life, he had to be helped out of the car, and could not mount the scaffold without assistance. On gaining the summit and beholding the horrible apparatus prepared for him, he would have sunk, if the assistants had not quickly placed him in a chair.

But De Mille maintained an undaunted deportment to the last. Although he was still very lame from the effects of his fall from the window of the Epée de Bois, he refused all assistance to ascend the steps of the scaffold. As he reached the fatal platform, the yells that were resounding on all sides suddenly ceased, and a deep silence ensued. Amid this hush, which was the more impressive from the contrast it offered to the previous din, De Mille took a last look around.

With a composure which, under the circumstances, was astonishing, and which extorted something of admiration from the thousands who watched him, he allowed his gaze to wander over the sea of upturned faces that invaded the scaffold on all sides—noted the old and picturesque habitations forming one side of the Place de Grève—surveyed the stately Hôtel de Ville, and remarked the line of carriages drawn up before it, wondering how they came to be there; and then, bidding an everlasting adieu to all on earth, cast a look towards heaven, and was still gazing upwards, when a slight touch on the shoulder recalled him to the terrible business on hand. He then perceived that De Horn was kneeling before the curé of Saint Paul, and immediately prostrated himself beside him.

During all this time the crowd kept such profound silence that the voices of the prisoners reciting their prayers could be distinctly heard at some distance from the scaffold. Their devotions over, Père Gueret exhorted them to bear their sufferings with resignation, and to trust in the Saviour who had died for them. He then held the crucifix to their lips, and they both kissed it fervently.

Hitherto, no word had passed between them since they quitted the Châtelet, and they had not even exchanged a look. Had it been possible, De Mille would have embraced his unhappy associate, but his arms being bound, he could only gaze mournfully into his face.

"Comte de Horn," he said, "I implore your forgiveness. If you had not listened to my evil suggestions your hands would be free from blood, and you would not be upon this scaffold. I am the author and instigator of the crime for which we are both about to suffer. On my head alone ought to fall the punishment. My sole concern is that you must share my doom. Can you forgive me?"

"I do—I forgive you as I hope myself to be forgiven," replied De Horn, earnestly. "It matters little who suggested the crime. Our guilt is equal. May Heaven have mercy upon us both!"

"Amen!" ejaculated De Mille, fervently.

"Are you ready?" demanded the principal executioner, in a harsh voice.

Both prisoners replied in the affirmative.

"Heaven support you!" cried Père Gueret and the chaplain together. "We will pray for you."

The prisoners were then divested of their cloaks, and each was taken to the wheel intended for him, and bound tightly to it by cords.

During this terrible process, the Comte de Horn uttered many woful ejaculations, but his companion set his teeth firmly, and did not allow a word or groan to escape him.

When the assistants had completed their task, the executioners, each wielding a heavy bar of iron, advanced towards them.

At this moment a perceptible shudder ran through the assemblage, and shrieks and stifled exclamations were heard.

De Horn closed his eyes, and called upon all the saints for succour, but De Mille spoke not, and fixed such a look upon the executioner who approached him, as almost to intimidate the wretch.

It is not our design to inflict upon our readers any description of the dreadful scene that ensued. Happily, the horrible punishment to which the unhappy young men were subjected, and which was first practised in Paris during the reign of the chivalrous Francis the First, has long been abolished. But we may mention, in order to show the severity of the torture, that a coup de grace was never given to the sufferer. In the case before us, it is upon record that after the executioner had done his butcherly work upon the Comte de Horn, and broken his comely limbs, the miserable young man was allowed to remain in his agony for an hour and a half before death relieved him.

De Mille escaped with much less suffering. One of the assistants, who had been paid for the service, allowed the end of the rope that bound the culprit's neck to the wheel to drop between the planks. This cord was seized

by a hand beneath and tightened, so that De Mille was strangled almost before the executioner began his work.

The hand that pulled the cord and thus relieved the wretched young man from further torture was that of old Delmace.

The Regent having adjudged the confiscation of the property of the unhappy Comte de Horn to his brother Prince Maximilien, received the following scornful letter:

"I do not complain, monseigneur, of the death of my brother. But I do complain that your royal highness has violated in your own person the rights of the nobility and of the nation. I thank you for the confiscation of my brother's goods, but I should deem myself as infamous as he was if I received any favour from you. May God and the king one day render you justice as strict as you have rendered my unhappy brother!"

End of the Seventh Book.

BOOK VIII.—THE DOWNFAL OF THE SYSTEM.

I.

HOW THE MISSISSIPPIANS WERE DRIVEN FROM THE RUE QUINCAMPOIX.

THE dreadful crime perpetrated by the Comte de Horn and his associates furnished Law with a pretext for suppressing all agiotage, which, owing to the manœuvres of the Mississippians, who had now begun to speculate on the baisse, had become so prejudicial to the System. Accordingly, he issued a decree, prohibiting all persons from assembling in the Rue Quincampoix for the purpose of dealing in shares. The decree likewise prohibited any banker or broker from keeping a bureau in the street.

On the publication of this edict, the Mississippians,

who began to assemble as usual in the Rue Quincampoix, were driven out by the guard; all the bureaux were closed; and the street, lately the busiest and noisiest in Paris, became silent and deserted.

Law, however, found it utterly impossible to extinguish the fire which he himself had kindled. The passion for gambling still burnt as fiercely as ever in the breasts of the speculators. Expelled from their favourite rendezvous, the Mississippians met in detached groups in the Place des Victoires, in the Rue de la Ferronnerie, on the quays, and in other places, and though constantly dispersed by patrols, they managed to conduct their operations as before.

Thus baffled, Law issued a still more stringent decree, prohibiting all meetings for stock-jobbing purposes in any place whatsoever, on pain of imprisonment, and a fine of three thousand livres. But this second decree was violated in the same flagrant manner as the first, and determined resistance being offered by the Mississippians to those who interfered with them, Law at last very reluctantly agreed to allow them a legitimate place of meeting in the Place Vendôme.

Very different was the aspect of this new mart from that of the Rue Quincampoix, and the Mississippians gained immensely in comfort and convenience by the exchange from a narrow crowded street to a broad open place. Tents, ranged in lines across the magnificent area of the Place Vendôme, produced a novel and charming effect, and delighted the pleasure-loving Parisians, who flocked thither in crowds, as to a fair. Half of the tents were occupied by bankers and brokers from the Rue Quincampoix; the other half, which comprised the largest and most elegant of these temporary structures, were tenanted by traiteurs and dealers in costly stuffs, jewellery, and ornaments of all kinds.

Though the assemblage in the Place Vendôme was under the surveillance of the police, yet as a vast number of disorderly persons of both sexes mixed with it, the scenes that frequently took place caused so much scandal,

that Law broke up the camp, and transferred the Mississippians to another locality.

It may be remembered that among Law's vast possessions was the Hôtel de Soissons, which he had purchased for a very large sum from the Prince de Carignan. In the garden attached to this hotel he caused six hundred barraques to be constructed, and these he let at a very high rent to the bankers and brokers, the traiteurs, cafetièrs, cabaretiers, gambling-house keepers, and the various traders who ministered to the wants and pleasures of the Mississippians.

"The garden of the Hôtel de Soissons does not contain more than a couple of acres," writes Duhautchamp, "but there is not any other piece of ground in France of the same size which could produce so high a rent, since each barraque was let for five hundred livres a month, and the annual revenue would have amounted to three millions six hundred thousand livres if the garden had not proved the tomb of the System. The lines of barraques formed streets, which were paved, and in the midst there was a fountain, always gushing with water. The trees, which were allowed to remain, gave the place the appearance of the fair of Saint Laurent. There was no sort of traffic that did not take place in this garden. Gold itself was sold by the marc, the price being regulated by a manœuvre corresponding with that adopted in regard to paper. There were money-changers who cashed by the day a certain quantity of billets de banque to amuse the lower classes. Jewels, which six months before the opening of the gardens had cost only a hundred pistoles in billets de banque, were now resold for seven or eight thousand livres in the same paper; so that those who disposed of them made very considerable gains. Goods and apparel of all kinds were brought to the garden as to a market; but persons without occupation and of bad character, resorting to the taverns and cafés, threw the place into confusion."

II.

THE FATAL EDICT.

During all this time Law's efforts to uphold the System had been incessant but ineffectual. Decree after decree was issued, but with no other result than to aggravate the difficulties of the position. Specie was almost entirely banished, but though the billets de banque maintained their nominal value, the price of provisions and of all other necessaries was trebled, so that in effect the notes were depreciated to that extent. The shares of the Compagnie des Indes, which was now united to the Bank, had undergone a rapid and continuous fall, and were now not worth a twentieth part of the price to which they had been raised by the manœuvres of the Realisers. Moreover, there was every prospect that they would sink still lower, while it appeared equally certain that the billets de banque must be further depreciated.

Evidently a terrible financial crisis was at hand. No sooner did this become clear, than Law at once lost the wonderful popularity he had enjoyed. From being proclaimed on all hands, as we have seen from the ovation offered him in the Rue Quincampoix, as the regenerator and saviour of the country, he was now denounced as its worst enemy. The courtiers, whom he had enriched, caballed against him, and endeavoured to procure his overthrow. His mortal enemy, D'Argenson, who still retained the office of keeper of the seals, was most active in these plots; and, worse than all, the Abbé Dubois, who had hitherto been his staunch ally, turned against him. All the Regent's Roués were anxious for his dismissal from office, and Nocé, who, as we know, piqued himself upon his skill as a physiognomist, predicted that the comptroller-general would die by the rope. The Regent, however, who had a sincere regard for Law, refused to listen to the suggestions of his enemies.

At last, however, D'Argenson and Dubois resolved to bring matters to an issue, and in a conference which they had with the Regent, endeavoured to open his eyes to the peril in which the country was placed by the extension given to the System.

"Up to the present date," said D'Argenson, "billets de banque have been issued to the extent of two thousand six hundred millions, whereas the whole specie of the kingdom amounts only to thirteen hundred millions. To save the country from ruin, it is absolutely necessary that the proportion should be equalised between the notes and the coin, and this can only be done by doubling the value of the latter, which, I own, would be an extremely hazardous experiment, or by reducing the value of the notes to one-half."

"I am in favour of the latter expedient," said the Abbé Dubois. "It is impossible the notes can be repurchased by the government, and consequently there is no alternative but to reduce them."

"The proposition I would submit to your highness is this," pursued D'Argenson, "that the shares of the Compagnie des Indes be gradually reduced from their present price of eight thousand livres to five thousand, when they shall remain fixed and unalterable. I also propose that the billets de banque be reduced in a similar manner—for example, that a note of ten thousand livres be reduced at the rate of five hundred livres a month, until it declines to five thousand, or one-half its present value, when it shall remain fixed. The lesser notes, of course, to be reduced in the same proportion."

"The plan merits consideration," said the Regent.

"Every consideration has been given to it by the Duc de la Force, the Duc d'Antin, and myself, and we are agreed that it is the only means of averting a crisis," said D'Argenson. "The public interests imperatively demand that the step should be taken, and I urge upon your highness the necessity of issuing an edict to that effect without delay."

At this moment Law entered the cabinet, when the

Regent acquainted him with the proposition which had just been made by D'Argenson, and asked his opinion of it.

"I condemn it in the strongest terms possible," replied Law, indignantly regarding D'Argenson. "It is a most impolitic measure, and will prove destructive alike to the System and the country. If the System be allowed to go on in the way I have planned, though it may be beset with difficulties at the present moment, it must prosper. The annual revenue of the Compagnie des Indies is above eighty millions, and is susceptible of great increase. We can make good all our engagements, and pay a dividend of two hundred livres on each share that has been created. Our credit is unlimited. Our funds are enormous. We have the whole foreign trade, and all the public revenues of the kingdom, in our hands. We enjoy the protection of the government, and the confidence of the people. What, then, is there to fear?"

"The collapse of the System," replied D'Argenson. "But I deny that you possess the confidence of the people, or that the government can protect you. Your shares are daily declining, and your notes are depreciated. The Bank is almost drained of specie, so that if there should be a run upon it, it must infallibly stop payment, and a national bankruptcy ensue."

"I am under no apprehension of such an emergency," replied Law. "The issue of the notes has been greater than was originally intended, but the number was increased in order to pay off the State debts, and this being accomplished, the notes, as they are paid in, will be destroyed."

"But that process is too slow," said D'Argenson. "The danger is imminent. A remedy the most energetic and the most efficacious must be found, and that I have proposed to his highness."

"What you propose will be the death-blow of the System, and that you design," rejoined Law. "His highness, I trust, will reject your perfidious proposition. By the course proposed confidence will be for ever destroyed,

and with the loss of confidence the System, which is sustained by credit, must inevitably fall."

"You must yield to necessity," rejoined D'Argenson. "The inordinate development you have given to your System has brought you to this pass."

"Have I done nothing with the System?" said Law. "Have I not paid the State the fifteen hundred millions I engaged to furnish to it? Have I not rendered numerous services to the kingdom? Have I not introduced order into its finances? Have I not colonised the Mississippi, built two new cities, and created a foreign commerce? Have I not improved agriculture as well as trade? Have I not raised the price of the land, so as to enable the noble to pay off his encumbrances, and have I not given work to the artisan?"

"All this you have done," replied D'Argenson. "But your System has brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy, and it is for us to save it, and to save you, from the consequences of your rashness. Therefore we urge this measure upon his Highness the Regent."

"I vehemently protest against it," said Law, "and I repeat, that the measure will produce the very evils you propose to remedy. Do not gratify the malice of my enemies, monseigneur," he added to the Regent. "They are seeking only my ruin in the perfidious advice they give you. They care not if they bring destruction upon the country, provided they get rid of me. Rather than this fatal decree should be issued, I will retire from office."

"No, no, that must not be," said the Regent. "But I confess I do not think the measure so perilous as you represent it."

"It is absolutely necessary," said D'Argenson. "M. Law cannot be a judge in his own case. His reliance upon the System blinds him to the danger by which he is menaced."

"Well, I will issue the edict, and take all the responsibility of it upon myself," said the Regent.

"That will not [illegible] eur," said Law.

"All the consequences of this impolitic, this unjust measure, will fall on my head. I shall be charged with defrauding the holders of notes of half their money. If my services have earned any gratitude from your highness, I pray you manifest it now. Out of consideration for me, do not take this step, which must destroy me."

"Do not yield, monseigneur," whispered Dubois, drawing close to the Regent. "He has not assigned his true reasons for opposing the edict. I will explain them anon. Be firm."

"Your answer, monseigneur?—your answer?" cried Law.

"The edict will be issued," rejoined the Regent.

Law did not attempt further remonstrance, but made an obeisance, and quitted the cabinet.

"We have gained our point," observed D'Argenson to Dubois. "I have requited him for the injury he did me."

"And I have removed a formidable rival," returned Dubois.

The consequences predicted by Law followed the publication of the fatal edict. By this thunder-stroke, the fabric which he had created with so much pains fell to the ground

All classes of society were seized with consternation, and, as soon as they recovered from the shock, vented their anger in loud reproaches against Law, whom they regarded as the author of the decree. Mobs assembled in different quarters, and so violently excited was the public mind, that it was deemed necessary to call out the troops to prevent an insurrection.

Ever inimical to Law, the parliament espoused the public opinion, and declaimed against the decree as unjust and iniquitous. The nobles were equally indignant, and the Duc de Bourbon, who lost half his immense gains, came in a state of fury to the Regent, and could not be appeased except by four millions.

Far from abating, however, the popular irritation increased, and the animosity to Law became so universal

that his life was not considered safe. Seditious and inflammatory placards were posted on the walls, and amongst these were these lines, conveying a threat both to Law and the Regent:

Jean Law a merité la corde,
Et le Régent le coutelas;
Et voilà d'où vient la concorde
De notre Régent avec Lass.*

Moreover, warning letters were sent to several householders, couched in these terms: "You are warned that, unless affairs change their aspect, there will be another Saint-Bartholomew on Saturday next. Do not, therefore, go out on that day if you value your life. Heaven preserve you from fire!"

Yet even at this period the Parisians jested at their misfortunes, and this song was chanted to the appropriate air *des Pendus:*

Lundi, j'achetai des actions,
Mardi, je gagnais des millions,
Mercredi, j'ornai mon ménage,
Jeudi, je pris un équipage,
Vendredi, je m'en fus au bal,
Et Samedi a l'hôpital.

* The financier's name was thus pronounced by the Parisians.

III

AN ÉMEUTE.

Six days after the promulgation of the fatal decree another edict was issued by the Regent restoring the actions and notes to their former value. But it was now too late. Confidence was gone. Credit had been annihilated by the first blow, and the mischief was found to be irreparable. The only effect of the new edict was to enable unprincipled persons to compel their creditors to take the discredited notes. To increase the disastrous state of things, payment was stopped at the Bank, under the pretext that great frauds had been committed by some of the clerks, and that it was necessary to examine the accounts. This was done to prevent the further drain of specie. The prohibition against the possession of gold was withdrawn, but the favour was treated with derision, since it came at a moment when all gold was gone.

The distress of the people now became intolerable, and it seemed probable that thousands, possessed of paper-money, which now became worthless, would perish from starvation. Workmen were at once thrown out of employment; manufactures and commerce came to a stand, —not only in Paris, but in the provinces, dividends, wages, and pensions were no longer paid—in short, the public ruin was complete. The State finances were no better. The treasury was emptied, and the king himself without a revenue.

In resuming its payments, which it did after a few days' closure, the Bank at first only cashed notes of a hundred livres, and shortly afterwards only those of ten livres. The workmen, the small shopkeepers, and all those whose small means scarcely sufficed for existence, besieged the Hôtel Mazarin night and day, and filled the Rue Vivienne and the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs with a compact mass. The crowd was as great as that col-

lected on the same spot to obtain subscriptions, but the motive that brought them there was widely different. Many persons passed the entire night at the gates of the Hôtel Mazarin. When the gates were opened the rush was terrible, and scarcely a day passed that several persons were not stifled or trampled under foot.

"To arrive at the bureaux," says the chronicler of the Journal de la Régence, "it was necessary to pass between a long wooden barricade, on the top of which workmen and porters clambered, and flung themselves upon the crowd, increasing the pressure, and throwing down many, who were trampled under foot, and much injured. Such was the eagerness to obtain a miserable pistole at the peril of life and limb. From three o'clock in the morning the Rue Vivienne was filled from one extremity to the other with a crowd collected from all the quarters in the city and the remotest faubourgs, in order to be first to enter the garden-gate of the Hôtel Mazarin, when it should please the directors of the Compagnie des Indes and the clerks to show themselves at the bureaux in the gallery to make payments, which rarely commenced before eight or nine o'clock, and continued till noon, or perhaps an hour later. On leaving the gallery, all those who had secured a pistole hurried to a tavern to refresh themselves after their frightful fatigue. A number of persons scaling the ruins of the houses which Law had begun to pull down in the Rue Vivienne, ran along the garden-wall of the Hôtel Mazarin, and catching hold of the branches of the chesnut-trees planted near the wall, let themselves drop into the garden, there to await the opening of the barricade some three or four hours later."

Sometimes all this patience was expended in vain, and the bureaux were inexorably closed. Then arose complaints and maledictions against Law and the Regent; stones and other missiles were hurled against the windows of the Hôtel Mazarin; and these disorderly proceedings irritating the guard, sanguinary collisions would ensue. On one occasion, the angry crowd having thrown stones at the windows, as before mentioned, twenty soldiers of

the Invalides dispersed them at the point of the bayonet, wounding and arresting several.

A deplorable incident, which occurred at this time, had well-nigh caused Paris to be delivered up to the fury of the famished and justly-incensed mob.

One night a greater concourse than usual encumbered the Rue Vivienne and the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs. More than fifteen thousand persons, densely packed together, impatiently awaited the opening of the bureaux. A tumult arose, owing to the terrible pressure of those in the rear of the throng. Cries and groans proclaimed that numbers were injured, and when day dawned fifteen mutilated corpses were picked from beneath the feet of the crowd.

At this frightful spectacle the concourse, roused to fury, and forgetting the object that had brought them thither, abandoned the Bank, and shouting vengeance against Law and the Regent, placed the bodies on litters, five of which were borne to the Place Vendôme, and set down before the Hôtel Law. They then commenced an attack upon the house, declaring they would hang the comptroller-general; but before they could break open the gates a detachment of the Swiss guard appeared, and drove them away.

Meantime, all the approaches to the Palais were beset, the infuriated crowd demanding the Regent with loud cries. They were told he was at Bagnolet, but the assurance was disbelieved, and the vociferations increasing in violence, reached the chamber of the prince, and aroused him.

At the peril of his life, M. le Blanc, minister of war, descended amongst the crowd, distributed money amongst them, and sought to calm them. It being above all things necessary to get rid of the bodies, the sight of which inflamed the popular indignation, Le Blanc selected some half-dozen persons who appeared leaders of the outbreak, and said to them,

"My friends, remove these bodies. Deposit them in a church, and return to be paid."

The coolness of the minister and the promise of the reward produced the desired effect. He was obeyed. This diversion afforded time to introduce disguised mousquetaires into the palace; the royal guard had been despatched from the Tuileries; and the lieutenant-general of police had arrived with two brigades of the watch. The Regent was out of danger, and the gates of the palace were thrown open.

IV.

HOW LAW'S CARRIAGE WAS DEMOLISHED.

BEING informed that the tumult had in a great degree subsided, about an hour before noon Law entered his carriage, and drove to the Palais Royal. As he was passing along the Rue Saint Honoré, his carriage was recognised by a number of riotous persons, who still beset the neighbourhood of the Palais Royal, and was instantly surrounded and stopped.

A woman, whose husband had been crushed to death in the tumult at the gates of the Hôtel Mazarin, advanced to the door of the carriage, and shaking her clenched hands in his face, exclaimed:

"Robber and murderer! if there were only four women like me, you should be torn in pieces!"

This exclamation might have roused the passions of the crowd, if two men, whom Law recognised as the Irishmen, had not seized hold of the woman and dragged her forcibly away.

Taking advantage of the interference, Law, who had not for a moment lost his self-possession, leaped out of the carriage, and eyeing the angry crowd with contempt, called out, "Arrière! vous êtes des canailles."

Overawed by his looks and deportment, those nearest

him drew back, while the two Irishmen, having returned, stood beside him, ready to defend him from attack.

With a grateful glance at the devoted fellows, Law regained the carriage, the door of which was closed by Terry, and in another moment Law had passed safely through the gates of the Palais Royal.

On its return the empty carriage was again stopped by the mob, when the coachman, André, had the imprudence to imitate his master, and adopting the same language, called out, "A-bas! vous êtes des canailles!" Like success, however, did not attend him. No sooner were the words uttered than he was pulled from the box, assailed by a hundred furious hands, and carried away half dead. The carriage was demolished.

On the same morning the Court of Parliament had assembled to deliberate upon the grave events which had just occurred, and a debate was going on, when the president, M. de Mesmes, who had just received intelligence of the destruction of Law's carriage, called out,

> Messieurs, messieurs, bonne nouvelle!
> Le carosse de Law est réduit en caunelle.

The news was welcomed by loud plaudits from the whole court, and a voice inquired, "Is Law also torn in pieces?"

"I am sorry I cannot give you that satisfactory piece of intelligence," replied the president.

"Then we will issue a décret de prise-de-corps against him," cried several voices.

V.

HOW THE PARLIAMENT WAS EXILED TO PONTOISE.

On entering the Palais Royal, Law found the vestibule and gallery full of soldiers. In the Regent's cabinet were assembled the Duc de Bourbon, the Duc D'Antin, the Duc de la Force, Dubois, and D'Argenson. The events of the morning had greatly excited the Regent, the alarm he had at first experienced having given way to rage. Far from endeavouring to calm his anger, Dubois and D'Argenson heightened it by their observations. The prince was pacing to and fro within the chamber, but when Law made his appearance he rushed up to him, and in a voice hoarse from excess of passion, cried out, "Ha, traitor! ha, villain! Do you know what you have done? You have caused the death of twenty persons, and have spread sedition and discontent throughout Paris. The king himself is not safe. You have placed us all in peril. The people demand your head, and I do not see why I should refuse to gratify their just desire for vengeance."

"Deliver me up to them, if you think fit, monseigneur," replied Law. "Order my instant execution if you will, but do not charge me with offences I have not committed. I am not the author of the calamities which have just occurred, and which I profoundly regret. On the contrary, if my advice had been listened to—if the fatal edict, which I strenuously opposed, had not been issued—this dire misfortune would have been prevented. The real author of the mischief is M. D'Argenson, and your anger ought to be visited on him, and not on me. It was his aim to crush the System, and he has succeeded. But in executing his criminal and vindictive design, he has jeopardised the safety of your highness, and well-nigh caused a revolution."

"M. Law asserts the truth," said the Duc de Bourbon. "This popular ferment has been entirely caused by that

baneful edict. If any one is sent to the Bastille—if any one is put to death—it ought to be D'Argenson. I myself am a sufferer by his infamous machinations."

"I have no desire to leave you, monseigneur, at a perilous conjuncture like the present," said Law; "but I cannot consent to sit in the same council with M. D'Argenson. Either he or I must retire."

"Your highness cannot hesitate for a moment in the selection," remarked Dubois.

"I should think not," observed the Duc de Bourbon, dryly.

"No; I cannot part with M. Law," cried the Regent. "Therefore you must resign the seals, sir," he added to D'Argenson, "and D'Aguesseau shall be recalled from exile."

"Is a minister who has served you only too zealously, monseigneur, to be thus summarily dismissed?" interposed Dubois.

"Do not intercede for me," said D'Argenson. "M. Law has regained his ascendancy, and my disgrace naturally follows; but his highness will soon find out that he has preferred a mischievous counsellor to a faithful servant."

With this he made a profound obeisance to the Regent, and, casting a vindictive glance at Law, quitted the cabinet.

Shortly afterwards, M. la Vrillière, secretary of state, and M. le Blanc, entered, and a long discussion took place as to the measures necessary to be taken to crush the sedition. It was agreed on all hands that the parliament, from its avowed hostility to the government, was certain to keep the fire smouldering, and possibly rouse it again into a general conflagration, and that it was therefore indispensable to avert the danger by an immediate coup d'état against that body. Scarcely had this resolution been arrived at, when an usher announced that a deputation from the Court of Parliament, headed by the president, solicited an audience.

"Admit them instantly," said the Regent. "They have come at the right moment."

The deputation being then ushered in, was very coldly received by the Regent.

"Monseigneur," said the president, "we are come in the name of the people to demand that full inquiry be made into the causes of the terrible calamity that has just occurred at the gates of the Hôtel Mazarin. We trust also that prompt measures will be taken by your highness to alleviate the general distress."

"Full investigations shall be made, rely upon it, M. le Président," replied the Regent, "and as far as possible the sufferings of the people shall be relieved. But the parliament, by its constant opposition to the government, and its refusal to register our edicts, is the primary cause of the present scarcity of specie, and I will take good care that this fact shall be generally understood."

"Your highness will find it difficult to induce the public to credit that statement," remarked the president.

"Hear me, M. le Président," said Law. "The Compagnie des Indes will engage to reimburse and extinguish fifty millions of billets de banque a month, on the condition that their commercial privileges shall be renewed in perpetuity. Will the parliament register a decree to that effect?"

"No," replied the president, decidedly. "We will not perpetuate the Company by saving the Bank. Such is the feeling of distrust we entertain of your projects, M. Law, that we will register no edict emanating from you."

"You had better think twice, messieurs, before you refuse to register this edict," said the Regent, in a menacing tone.

"It is not a question which requires deliberation, monseigneur," said the president. "The parliament will do nothing to uphold M. Law's pernicious System."

"You will do nothing to support the government," rejoined the Regent. "If you continue obstinate, I warn you that an order shall be issued for your exile to Pontoise."

The president smiled, for he did not believe in the threat.

"I think it right to inform you, monseigneur," he said, "that we have just issued a décret de prise-de-corps against M. Law, and are determined to bring him to trial."

"Then you must execute the writ in this palace, for here he will remain," replied the Regent. "You have heard my resolve. If you continue contumacious, you go to Pontoise. Adieu, messieurs."

The audience being thus terminated, the deputation withdrew.

The parliament did not believe that the Regent, in the present temper of the people, would dare to execute his threat. They therefore brought matters to a speedy issue by peremptorily refusing to register the decree proposed by Law. Upon this, the Palais de Justice was at once invested by troops, and mousquetaires were sent to conduct the president and counsellors of parliament to Pontoise.

This coup d'état caused great amusement at court, and gave rise to the following lampoon, at which the Regent laughed heartily:

Le parlement est à Pontoise
Sur Oise,
Par ordre du Régent.
Mais nous rendra-t-on notre argent?
Non!—c'est pour chercher noise
Au parlement,
Qui s'en va coucher à Pontoise
Sur Oise,
Par ordre du Régent.

Notwithstanding all the expedients resorted to, the financial crisis increased daily in severity. The prices of provisions and of all articles, which could only be purchased by discredited notes, became so excessive as to be wholly out of the reach of the poor, many of whom died of absolute famine, and citizens lately wealthy and prosperous sank into poverty. As the high prices were continually increasing while the notes diminished in value, it will be easily imagined by what feelings of rage and despair the bulk of the community were agitated. Threats the most terrible were again uttered against Law and the

Regent, and if they had not both been attended by a strong escort, it is certain that violent hands would have been laid upon them.

The Princess Palatine mentions in her Memoirs, that at this period she received numerous letters containing frightful threats against the Regent. In one of the letters she was informed that two hundred bottles of poisoned wine had been prepared for her son, and it was added, if these failed, that a new kind of fire would be employed to burn him alive in the Palais Royal.

Menaces equally terrible were addressed to Law. No epithet was too injurious to be levelled against him, and the mildest form of expression was "Gueux infame! fripon! scélérat!" As he had lately been the idol of the people, so now he had become the object of their greatest detestation.

Notwithstanding the popular clamour, however, the Regent would not give him up, and fresh placards were posted on the walls, to this effect: "Save the king! Kill the Regent! Hang Law! and brave the consequences!" The populace also were excited to outrage and plunder by incendiary songs like the following, which were heard in all the cabarets:

Français, la bravoure vous manque!
Vous êtes plein d'aveuglement.
Pendre Law avec le Régent,
Et vous emparer de la Banque,
C'est l'affaire d'un moment.

And another, equally menacing, which commenced thus:

Français, garde ton argent,
Laisse dire le Régent.
Le fripon de Law va être pendu!

What would have been Law's fate, if he had fallen into the hands of the infuriated populace at this juncture, was made manifest by the narrow escape of M. Boursel. This gentleman was passing in his carriage along the Rue Saint Antoine, when his course was obstructed by a fiacre, the driver of which refusing to move, M. Boursel's lacquey

immediately got down, and, seizing the horse's head, tried to drag him out of the way. On this, the hackney-coachman immediately shouted out, "I see who is in the carriage! it is the robber Law. Friends!" he added, vociferating still more loudly, "here is Law! Kill him! kill him!"

On hearing these cries, the people rushed instantly towards the carriage, and would, no doubt, have torn the unfortunate gentleman in pieces, if he had not managed to escape into the church of the Grands Jésuites. But even here he would not have found a sanctuary, for he was pursued as far as the high altar, if a small door had not afforded him a means of exit into the convent, where he was safe.

VI.

THE CONVENT OF THE CAPUCINES.

AFTER the death of her father, Colombe remained for a few weeks in perfect seclusion at Guermande. She then announced her intention of retiring for ever from the world, and burying her sorrows in a convent. Vainly did Lady Catherine Law use every argument to dissuade her from the step. Vainly did little Kate add her entreaties to those of her mother. Vainly did Evelyn implore her not to abandon him—nothing could change her resolution.

"What have I to live for?" she said to Evelyn. "I will not bring shame and dishonour on those I have loved. When that dreadful catastrophe, which has darkened my life, occurred, I felt that all my hopes of earthly happiness were over. I shall never cease to love you, Evelyn, but I cannot now be your wife."

"Why not?" cried Evelyn, distractedly. "No opprobrium can attach to you."

"The world will think differently, Evelyn," she re-

joined. "A stigma is for ever fixed upon me, which nothing can efface. Is the sister of the unhappy Comte de Horn more guilty than I am? Was she implicated in his dreadful crime? No! Yet by his felon death she has been rendered infamous, and cannot become a canoness."

"But this unjust and cruel law only prevails in Germany, and does not exist in France. I repeat, that no obloquy can attach to you. Besides, few know that De Mille was your brother—and those who do, deeply commiserate you."

"Were the terrible truth absolutely unknown, I could not hide it from myself," replied Colombe. "But it cannot be hidden. It will rise up against me. Were I to yield to your entreaties—were I to consent to become your wife—you would one day hate me."

"I hate you, Colombe! Impossible! Banish the notion from your mind."

"I cannot banish it. What would you say if you heard me called the sister of an assassin? No, no—Evelyn, I can never be yours. You must return to England. You must forget me. You must seek another wife. You will never find one who will love you more truly than I have done—but at least she will be free from the dreadful stigma that attaches to me."

"If I lose you I will wed no other," cried Evelyn. "But you will not leave me thus! You will not condemn me to wretchedness."

"Evelyn," she replied, sadly but firmly, "I repeat, that my decision is taken. Nothing can change it. The very love I feel for you makes me resolute. I am for ever blighted—for ever! I doubt not that you will feel the shock severely at first—but it will wear out in time."

A few days after this, Colombe entered the convent of the Capucines, in the Rue Saint Honoré. Ere she had been long an inmate of this religious house, her health began sensibly to decline, and though she made no complaint, Lady Catherine, who visited her almost daily, insisted upon sending Doctor Chirac to her, and he at

once pronounced that consumption had set in, and that the insidious disease had already made too much progress to be arrested.

This terrible announcement, which filled all those who loved her with dismay, was received almost with joy by Colombe. She had prayed that a term might be put to her sufferings, and her prayers were heard. Fain would Lady Catherine, who felt for her all a mother's tender love and anxiety, have had her return to the Hôtel Law, but she could not be prevailed upon to leave the convent.

"I cannot return to the scene of my former happiness," she said. "I will die here."

A few days after this the popular disturbances broke out, and Lady Catherine then felt that it was better the poor sufferer had not been induced to quit her retreat.

But how fared it with Evelyn during this trying time? Though Colombe again and again entreated him to return to England, and though both Lady Catherine and Belinda seconded her entreaties, he refused compliance. He could not tear himself from Paris. He wandered about seeking distraction, but could never banish his gloomy thoughts. When the Place Vendôme was converted into a camp, as we have described, he went there often, noting the follies and excesses of the Mississippians with a jaundiced eye; and when the stock-jobbers were transferred to the gardens of the Hôtel de Soissons, he followed them thither, and witnessed many a singular scene—especially after the publication of the fatal edict that destroyed the System.

In the same vain search of distraction he also visited the places of public amusement, and the feelings of misanthropy which were creeping over him were heightened by finding that when universal misery prevailed, the theatres and ball-rooms were nightly crowded. While the people were starving, the upper classes and the wealthy Mississippians were rioting in luxury. Masked balls were constantly given at the Opera, and the receipts of the house were doubled. "I have been to the theatre in the Palais Royal," writes Mathieu Marais, in his journal

kept at the period, "where Baron played the Earl of Essex. The crowd was prodigious, in spite of the general distress. The women were covered with precious stones; the men magnificently attired. On one side sat the Regent with Madame de Parabère; on the other was M. le Duc with Madame de Prie. Any one who had only seen the inside of the theatre would have thought that the kingdom was rich; but on going out the wretchedness was yet more striking by contrast." Further on the same journalist remarks: "In the midst of this misery the Opera Balls have commenced, the admission being six livres for each person. There was a great crowd on the night of Saint Martin, and many have melted away their billets de banque, sacrificing almost all they had for a dance, and leaving those at home to die of hunger. Voilà le Français, et les Parisiens!"

Such spectacles and such contrasts—misery, famine, and despair on the one hand—luxury, splendour, and profusion on the other—had never before been witnessed as were then displayed in Paris, and it was a marvel to Evelyn that the starving sufferers did not fall upon the rich and deprive them of the wealth they so ill employed.

One evening, after he had been to the garden of the Hôtel de Soissons, Evelyn proceeded to the convent of the Capucines. For more than a week he had not been allowed admittance to Colombe, but he had learnt from the portress that she was not so well. On reaching the convent, he observed a group of persons collected before the gate, which was closed. In the midst of this group there was a miserable-looking man, who was declaiming violently against Law, taxing him with having ruined him, and evidently producing a strong effect upon his auditors. The man was still continuing his harangue, when the gates of the convent were thrown open, and a carriage came forth. But it had scarcely advanced into the street, when some one in the throng called out, "Look there! that is the livery of the robber who refuses to pay billets of ten livres."

Hearing the exclamation, the coachman applied the whip, and attempted to drive off, but the crowd were too quick for him. Regardless of the risk they incurred, several persons threw themselves in the way of the carriage, while others seized hold of the horses. Every eye was now directed to the interior of the equipage, in the hope of discovering Law. But they were disappointed. The only occupant of the carriage was a young and beautiful girl, who appeared dreadfully frightened at what was occurring. Her looks moved the crowd to compassion, and she might, perhaps, have been allowed to pass on, if the voice that had previously spoken had not called out, "It is the robber's daughter! It is Mam'zelle Law! I know her."

Immediately upon this a heavy stone was launched against the carriage-window, which Kate in her fright had drawn up, and shivered the glass. Notwithstanding the poor girl's screams, and although the blood was streaming down her face from a cut in the forehead, other missiles were thrown, and the crowd might have proceeded to yet more frightful extremities, if a deliverer had not appeared in the shape of Evelyn.

Forcing his way to the carriage, he tore open the door, and seizing Kate, who had fallen back in a half-fainting state, took her in his arms, and called out to the menacing crowd, "What! are you men, and would injure an innocent child!"

The appeal and the looks of the speaker produced the desired effect. Infuriated as they were, the crowd could not behold Kate thus presented to them and continue their violence. Those nearest to Evelyn drew back, and taking instant advantage of the movement, he flew with his burden to the convent. Already the gate had been closed by the porter, but the wicket was left open, and through this Evelyn passed, and the moment he had done so it was shut, and pursuit prevented.

On passing through the gate, Evelyn found himself in the presence of several of the nuns, who had flocked into the court-yard on hearing the disturbance. He instantly

consigned poor Kate, who was still in a state of insensibility, to their charge, and she was borne off to the abbess's own room, while he himself was shown by one of the elder sisters to the parlour ordinarily allotted to visitors. Here he was left alone for some time, but at last the door opened, and the abbess entered. Her looks were so sad that Evelyn's apprehensions were roused, and he anxiously inquired how Mademoiselle Law was going on.

"She has quite recovered," replied the abbess. "No serious consequences are to be apprehended from the injury she has received. I have despatched a messenger to Lady Catherine Law to relieve her from any uneasiness in regard to her daughter. So far well. But I have sad news for you. You are aware of Colombe's precarious condition?"

"Is she worse?" cried Evelyn. "For pity's sake, tell me. Do not keep me in suspense."

"Alas! she is rapidly passing away," replied the abbess.

On hearing this, Evelyn uttered a cry of anguish so piercing that it went to the heart of his listener. She waited for a few moments till the paroxysm with which he was seized had abated, and then said, in tones of profound commiseration,

"This morning Colombe became alarmingly ill, and Doctor Chirac being hastily summoned, declared at once, on seeing her, that she had not many hours to live. As the truth could not be disguised, I was about to communicate it to the sweet sufferer, when she took my hand, and gently pressing it, said, with an angelic smile, 'I know what you are about to tell me. I could read my sentence in Doctor Chirac's looks. I feel I have not many hours to live. But death will be a relief to me, and I am fully prepared for the blow. There are two persons to whom I desire to bid farewell—Kate Law and Evelyn Harcourt.'"

An irrepressible groan burst from Evelyn.

"The request could not be refused," pursued the abbess. "Mademoiselle Law came immediately on receiving the

summons, but you were not to be found, and I feared that poor Colombe's latest wish would have been ungratified, and that she would expire without beholding you. But even this disappointment, which must have been bitter to her, she bore without a murmur. But our Blessed Lady in her compassion willed it otherwise, and brought you hither for a double purpose—to be the means of rescuing Mademoiselle Law from the violence of the populace, and to soothe poor Colombe's parting pangs. You should have been admitted to her sooner, but up to this moment she has been engaged in religious offices, and could not be disturbed. Follow me, and as you value Colombe, and would not disturb her happy frame of mind, I pray you to put all possible constraint upon your feelings. This must be the condition of the interview."

They then quitted the room, ascended a staircase, and entered a gallery in which were the dormitories. Stopping at a door, the abbess softly opened it, and admitted Evelyn into a room, where he beheld a sight that well-nigh unmanned him.

On a small couch, simple in character as the rest of the furniture of the chamber, which was all of conventual plainness, lay Colombe, her appearance betokening the extremity to which she was reduced.

Approaching dissolution was written plainly on her features. Since Evelyn beheld her last, a fearful change had taken place in her countenance, but its beauty was unimpaired. So rigid were her lineaments, so like marble was their death-like hue, that she resembled an exquisite piece of monumental sculpture. Her very attitude contributed to this effect, for her thin hands pressed a crucifix devoutly to her bosom.

By the bedside knelt Kate Law, praying fervently, and at the farther end of the room were two nuns, likewise engaged in devotion. It was a profoundly touching scene, but though it afflicted Evelyn at the moment, he loved to dwell upon it afterwards, when the bitterness of his grief had passed.

The door had been opened so gently, and both the

abbess and Evelyn entered with such noiseless footsteps, that at first none of the occupants of the room were conscious of their presence. The only sounds heard were the murmured prayers of Kate Law and the nuns.

Holding his breath, so as not to disturb the sacred quietude of the scene by sigh or groan, Evelyn gazed at the form of her he loved. So motionless was its attitude, that for a few moments he thought all was over, but on closer scrutiny the feeble movements caused by respiration showed that the vital spark had not yet fled. An exclamation, which he could not repress, caused Colombe to open her eyes. As she fixed them upon him, a slight, very slight, flush rose to her pallid cheeks, and a faint smile played around her lips. But the flush presently faded away, and though the eyes still rested lovingly upon him, their light grew gradually dim.

On hearing Evelyn's approach, Kate Law had risen from her kneeling posture, and moved to another part of the room.

Enabled thus to approach the dying maiden, he pressed his lips to her brow, and taking her thin cold hand, implored her to speak to him.

An effort at compliance was made by the expiring damsel. Her lips moved, but the power of articulation was gone, and no sound was audible. A very slight pressure, however, was perceptible from the hand which he grasped in his own.

To the last her gaze remained fixed upon him, and proclaimed the love which her lips were unable to utter —a love only quenched when her heart was stilled for ever.

Evelyn was roused from the stupefaction into which he was thrown, by the abbess, who said to him in a commiserating voice,

"Do not grieve for her, my son. You have only parted from her for a time. You will rejoin her in heaven. And now go hence, and leave us to pray for the soul of our departed sister."

Evelyn obeyed. Casting one last look at the inanimate body of Colombe, he quitted the chamber of death.

Before morning he was on his way to England, and not till many years afterwards did he return to Paris, when his first visit was to the chapel of the convent of the Capucines, where Colombe was interred. All her possessions had been given to the establishment.

VII.

HOW LAW RESIGNED HIS FUNCTIONS.

WITHIN twelve months from the period when the System attained its apogee, it had entirely disappeared. The billets de banque were abolished, being partially converted into rentes or actions rentières; agiotage was suppressed; the Bank shut; the shares of the Compagnie des Indes marked with discredit, and almost confiscated. The Company itself, which, according to the grand design of its founder, was to comprise the whole of the Public Revenues, the Mint, and the entire Foreign Trade with banking operations, was dismembered. This done, vigorous measures were commenced against the wealthy Mississippians, and an extraordinary commission was appointed to examine into their affairs. To prevent flight, a decree was issued prohibiting, on pain of death, any person from leaving the kingdom without a passport. These rigorous proceedings, in which he had no share, excited a fresh burst of fury against Law.

His position had, indeed, become so critical, that he could no longer hesitate to solicit his dismissal from the Regent. By arrangement, the Duc de Bourbon alone was present at the interview.

"I am come, monseigneur," said Law to the Regent, "to resign all my offices into your hands, and to request your gracious permission to quit the kingdom. I have long contemplated this step, and have only been deterred from taking it by the hope that I might be serviceable

to your highness. I can now be no longer useful to you, but shall be an embarrassment rather than an assistance. The System is entirely abolished. I have helped to undo my work, and must leave to my successors the task of reinstating the finances. Grave faults have been laid to my charge, and accusations have been brought against me, which your highness knows to be groundless. With everything at my disposal, I have profited little by the System in comparison with multitudes of others. While many have made fortunes of forty and fifty millions, I have only made twelve millions, and these have been laid out, as your highness is aware, in the purchase of lands in this country. No part of my gains have been remitted to foreign countries. That I solemnly declare."

"I entirely believe you, sir," replied the Regent, "and I beg you to understand that I have never for a moment listened to the calumnies of your enemies."

"I trust I shall not be deprived of my possessions, monseigneur," pursued Law. "When I came into this country at your highness's express invitation, I had more than two millions of livres. I owed nothing, and had large credit. In quitting France, I shall take nothing with me. I propose to cede the whole of my possessions to the Compagnie des Indes. When my debts have been paid by the Company, I will only ask that the two millions which I had when I entered into your highness's service shall be remitted to me; or that that sum shall be invested in the names of my children. I do not think this is asking too much, and I scarcely believe that my enemies will deny me justice."

"I hope this can be done, monseigneur," said the Duc de Bourbon.

"I cannot give a promise which I may be unable to fulfil," said the Regent. "If I can prevent it, your property shall not be sequestered," he added to Law.

"Hear me, monseigneur," said Law. "If I had not been charged with the general direction of the Compagnie des Indes, of the Bank, and the Finances, and very zealous in the administration of state affairs, I should not

be in my present situation; and I contend, that so far from being deprived of my possessions, if I had not the means of fulfilling my engagements, his majesty and the Company ought to furnish me with means of doing so, since I have served them with unexampled disinterestedness. But as I have effects in the hands of the Company, and other possessions, far exceeding the amount of my liabilities, it is but just that I should be allowed to settle my accounts with the Company, before any sequestration of my property shall take place."

"I have the greatest personal regard for you, M. Law, and have proved my friendship for you," replied the Regent. "If I had yielded to the solicitations of your enemies, you would be now in the Bastille. I have been given clearly to understand that your head is to be the pledge of my reconciliation with the parliament. But such a proposition, I need not say, I indignantly rejected, and only advert to it to show what my feelings are towards you. But I may not be able to prevent the confiscation of your property."

"It is for my children that I plead," said Law, in a voice of much emotion, "whose interests I have sacrificed in serving the State. If this confiscation should take place, they will be without property or home. I could have placed my daughter in the first houses of Italy, of Germany, or England, but I refused all offers, as inconsistent with my duty and attachment to the State I served. For the sake of my children—and, above all, for the sake of my daughter—I pray you, monseigneur, let not my property be wrested from me."

"Whatever may happen, you may depend upon a pension from me," said the Regent.

"After being prime minister of France, I cannot become a pensioner, monseigneur," rejoined Law, proudly.

"I trust you will not object to receive assistance from me, M. Law," said the Duc de Bourbon. "Any sum you may require shall be at your service."

"I thank your highness," replied Law, "but I want nothing but a passport."

"That you shall have at once," replied the Regent, proceeding to his table. "Whither do you intend to proceed?"

"To Brussels, monseigneur," replied Law.

"Here is the passport," said the Regent, giving it to him. "When do you depart?"

"In a few days, monseigneur—as soon as I can arrange my affairs, and make preparations for my journey."

"Do not lose time," said the Regent. "I can no longer offer you an asylum in the Palais Royal. The parliament will return from exile to-morrow, and may cause your arrest, and then nothing can save you."

"Go to your château of Guermande to-night," said the Duc de Bourbon. "There you will be safe. Remain there till I can send my own chaise de poste to convey you to Brussels. By this plan your flight will be entirely unsuspected. Take your son with you if you choose, but leave Lady Catherine and your daughter behind. They shall be my guests at Saint Maur."

"I gratefully accept your offer, M. le Duc," replied Law, "and will follow your judicious advice. I will go to Guermande to-night, and there await the arrival of the travelling-carriage you are good enough to offer me."

"I am glad you have so decided, for I am persuaded it is the only safe course to pursue," replied the Regent. "To disarm suspicion, in case your enemies are plotting against you, you must show yourself in my box at the Opera to-night. After the performance, you can drive to Guermande. As I cannot have you at supper, you must dine with me—and you, too, M. le Duc. We may not meet again for some time," he added kindly to Law, "and I should like to see as much of you as I can."

Thus given, the invitation could not be refused, though Law would fain have declined it.

"I see you have something further to say to me," observed the Regent to Law. "What is it?"

"Merely this, monseigneur. If I may be permitted to recommend a successor to the post I have filled in your councils, it would be M. Lepelletier de la Houssaye. He

is in possession of all my views, and will be of great utility, I am sure, to your highness at this juncture."

"Have you spoken to M. de la Houssaye on the subject?" asked the Regent.

"I have, monseigneur," replied Law; "I promised to name him to your highness."

"I thought as much. He proved his gratitude by proposing to me this very morning that you should be sent to the Bastille."

"Time was when such baseness would have stung me to the quick," said Law, "but I have experienced so much ingratitude of late, that I am become callous. I am not surprised to find M. de la Houssaye as hollow as the rest of my friends. But I adhere to the opinion I have expressed, and recommend him as the best man for the office of comptroller-general."

"He shall have the appointment," replied the Regent; "but he shall know that he owes it entirely to you, and that you asked it after being made acquainted with his perfidy."

"That is the sole revenge I desire," said Law. "When I am gone, do not forget what I have often said to you, monseigneur, that the introduction of Credit has wrought a greater change in the powers of Europe than the discovery of the Indies; that it is for the sovereign to give Credit, and not to receive it; and that the people require Credit, and must have it."

He then withdrew with the Duc de Bourbon, who conveyed him in his own carriage to the Hôtel Law.

VIII.

HOW LAW ANNOUNCED HIS DEPARTURE TO HIS FAMILY.

Law's ante-chambers had long since been deserted. Not one of the duchesses and other ladies of rank who had paid Lady Catherine Law so much homage now came near her, and if they met her, scarcely deigned to notice her. Their contemptible conduct, however, gave Lady Catherine little concern, and she was consoled by the friendship of Belinda, who still remained with her.

During the season of his unpopularity, Law had of course ceased to give grand entertainments, and indeed he received no company whatever; but his establishment continued the same, and was conducted on a princely scale to the last.

All his household were devoted to him, regarding him as the most generous of masters, and not one of them would leave him. Amongst the number of his dependents were our two Irish acquaintances, Terry O'Flaherty and Pat Molloy, who, after coming to his rescue when his carriage was attacked by the populace, had been taken into his service.

On his return from the Palais Royal, Law sought his wife, and found her in her boudoir with Belinda. Both being aware of his intention to resign, he at once said, "Well, it is done. The Regent has accepted my resignation. To-night I go to Guermande, where I shall remain till I start for Brussels."

"Am I not to accompany you?" said Lady Catherine.

"I wish you could," replied Law, "but it is absolutely necessary that you should remain to arrange my affairs. John will go with me, but I shall leave Kate with you, and I shall have no apprehensions whatever about you, for you will be under the care of the Duc de Bourbon. To-morrow you and Kate will go to Saint-Maur. As regards myself, I shall halt for a few days at Brussels, after

which I shall make my way to Venice, where I shall take up my abode till you and Kate can join me."

"Alas!" exclaimed Lady Catherine. "Now the moment for action is come, my courage quite deserts me. You must stay with me, Belinda."

"That cannot be," said Law. "It will not be safe for you to remain in this hotel after my departure, and Belinda cannot accompany you to Saint-Maur. You must, perforce, part with her, but I hope you will soon meet again. It is impossible to say what may happen to me, or how my plans may be changed; but it is my present intention to revisit London—and at no distant date."

"You hear that, dearest Kate," cried Belinda. "Mr. Law says he will come to London, so we shall soon meet again. Nay, do not weep, my dearest friend. The trial will be hard, but you will be quite equal to it, I am sure. You have often told me how sick you are of splendour—how disgusted you are with the meanness and ingratitude of great people—and how much you long for quietude. Well, now you will have your wish, and I trust you will find that happiness in retirement which you appear to have sought in vain in the great world."

"You know I have not been happy, Belinda," rejoined Lady Catherine. "Neither do I believe there can be any real happiness amid such society as that into which I have been thrown. But I have been content to endure it, for my dear husband's sake.—You see that my words have come to pass," she added, turning to Law. "From the hour that you abjured your religion, your prosperity has deserted you."

"It would almost seem so," he rejoined, gloomily.

"Say no more on that subject now," cried Belinda. "Let me tell you my plans. To-morrow morning, when you go to Saint-Maur, Kate, I shall start for London. Luckily, my husband has a passport."

"I will ask a favour of you, Belinda, and I am sure you will grant it," cried Law. "Take those two poor Irish chairmen with you. I want to send them back to London."

"I will take them with the greatest pleasure," she replied. "Poor fellows! they have had some strange experiences of life since their arrival in Paris, and I hope will go back wiser than they came."

"Bring my children to me, Kate," said Law to his wife. "I wish to see them. Tell them what has happened."

Lady Catherine was not absent long, but reappeared with her children. Little Kate, who, like her mother and Belinda, was in mourning for Colombe, looked rather pale. She instantly flew to her father, who strained her to his breast, and kissed her tenderly.

"Your mamma has told you what has happened," he said, gazing at her with much emotion; "that I have resigned my offices to the Regent, and am about to quit Paris, in all probability for ever. My enemies have triumphed over me, and would not be content with my ruin, but would put me to death, if they got me into their hands. Therefore, I must fly to preserve my life. Come hither, John," he added to his son, "and listen to what I have to say to your sister. I hoped to make you rich, Kate, and to give you a marriage-portion equal to that of a princess. But now I have nothing to bestow upon you."

"Oh! do not think of me, dearest papa!" sobbed Kate.

"It is the thought of you and your brother that troubles me most," said her father. "Were it not for you, my darlings, I could bear my losses without a murmur."

"Do not grieve, dearest papa," said his son. "I dare say you will soon be as rich as ever again."

"I cannot indulge the hope, my dear boy," replied his father. "But I trust you may become rich by your own exertions and ability."

"Yes, I *will* become rich," cried John, emphatically. "I will try to be as great a man as you, papa."

"I trust you may be luckier than your father, John," said Law, "and not lose wealth, honour, and power, the moment you have got them in your grasp. What say you, Kate?" he added to his daughter. "Does the thought of all you have lost afflict you?"

"Not in the least, dearest papa," she rejoined. "I am only sorry for you. If you do not suffer from the change, I shall be quite content. Poor Colombe used to tell me that more real happiness is to be found in a humble abode than in a palace, and I am sure all she said was true. I shall be sorry to leave this splendid house, but wherever circumstances may take me, I shall try to be cheerful."

"And the endeavour will be crowned with success," replied her father. "But come," he added, rising. "I must take a last look at my pictures and books. My treasures will soon be dispersed, and I shall never, perhaps, behold them again."

IX.

HOW LAW TOOK A LAST SURVEY OF HIS HOUSE.

ACCOMPANIED by his two children, and followed by his wife and Belinda, he quitted the salon, and entered the grand gallery, which was crowded with antique statues and bronzes from Italy, while the walls were hung with the choicest works of the great masters. Then, passing through a noble suite of apartments, magnificently furnished in the taste of the period, he came to the library, which contained a rare collection of books, which he had purchased from the Abbé Bignon.

"I wonder into whose hands my books will fall," thought Law, as he looked wistfully around. "Dubois has always envied me my library. I would never sell it to him. Perhaps he may get it now."

Law was right in the conjecture. After his flight, his treasures became a sort of pillage to the Regent's favourites, of which the Abbé Dubois obtained the lion's share, seizing upon the pictures, statues, and books.

It was not without a severe pang that Law quitted the

library. Parting with his books was like bidding adieu to old friends, but at last he tore himself away, and proceeded to the gardens, which were laid out with great taste, and had been his especial delight, the few tranquil hours he had enjoyed since he had devoted himself to public affairs having been passed in their shady retreats. It was now December, and, consequently, the gardens were robbed of much of their attractions, but their somewhat dreary aspect harmonised better with his feelings than would have been the case if the trees had been in full foliage, and the parterres gay with flowers.

As he was retiring, he perceived the two Irishmen, who were engaged in some gardening occupations, and, calling to them, said that Mrs. Carrington was returning to London on the morrow, and had agreed to take them with her.

"But we don't want to go, do we, Pat?" rejoined Terry. "We're quite happy here, and would far rather remain with your lordship."

"Don't send us away," cried Pat. "We don't want wages—the pleasure of serving your lordship, and Lady Catherine, and mam'zelle, is enough for us."

"You must go," said Law. "I may not be able to afford you a home much longer."

"Och! that alters the question entirely," cried Terry. "We wouldn't be a burden to your lordship. But we shall be sore-hearted to laive you."

"I am quite as sorry to lose you as you can be to quit me," said Law. "Here are twenty louis d'or," he added, giving him a purse. "Divide the money between you."

"Your journey home shall be no expense to you," observed Belinda. "I and my husband will take care of you."

"Well, after all, we shall go back as rich as we cum," said Terry. "And we can always make it our boast that for a couple of months we have lived like lords, ridden in our own carriage, and kept our own valets. But wot we have best reason to be proud ov, and wot we shall

nivir forget to our dyin' day, is, that we have enjoyed your lordship's notice. Be sure we shall never forget your kindness."

Bowing respectfully, they then withdrew.

X.

A GRATEFUL SERVANT.

As the party entered the house, Thierry met them, and begged to say a word to his master, upon which Law took him to his cabinet, and as soon as the door was closed, the valet said:

"I hope you will forgive what I am about to say, monseigneur. It proceeds entirely from the sincere attachment I feel for you. Situated as I am, I cannot be unaware of the difficulties in which you are placed; indeed, I can almost conjecture what will happen. Now hear me, monseigneur," he added, after a moment's hesitation. "Owing to the position I have held in your household, and the large fees I have received, I have made a very considerable sum of money. It is to you, monseigneur, and to you alone, that I owe my fortune. Therefore it is to you that I offer it. I place the whole of it at your disposal. I trust, monseigneur, that you will honour me by accepting it. It is no gift, for the money is rightfully your own."

For a moment Law was quite overcome, and walked apart to recover himself. He then said, in a voice that betrayed his emotion, "I thank you sincerely, Thierry. You are a true friend. No man ever, perhaps, experienced such base ingratitude as I have done. Hundreds—nay, thousands—whom I have enriched have abandoned me since I have lost my credit, and so far from tendering me

assistance, have conspired to hasten my ruin. Devotion like yours touches me, therefore, profoundly. I cannot accept your offer, but I fully appreciate the motives with which it is made, and am deeply sensible of your kindness."

"I fear I have not properly expressed myself, monseigneur. Do not suppose for a moment that I would presume——"

"You have displayed equal delicacy and good feeling, my good friend," interrupted Law, "and I am sure you will understand *why* I must decline your kindly offer. Nay, do not urge me more. I am not to be shaken. Neither can I allow you to follow my fallen fortunes. After the proof you have given me of your attachment, I can have no secrets from you. After the Opera to-night, I go to Guermande, where I shall remain for a day or two, and then proceed to Brussels in the Duc de Bourbon's travelling-carriage. You can go with me to Guermande, if you will, but no farther."

"I thank you for that permission, monseigneur," replied Thierry. "But I still trust you will allow me to attend you to Brussels."

"No, you must return to Paris," replied Law. "My son goes with me. Lady Catherine and my daughter will require your services, and I am sure you will oblige me by attending to them."

"On that you may rely, monseigneur."

"From motives of prudence, I shall not return to this hotel after the Opera, but shall go to the palace of the Duc de Bourbon," pursued Law. "Have the carriage there to meet me, so that I can start at once for Guermande."

"Monseigneur's directions shall be carefully obeyed. He will find the carriage waiting for him at the Palais Bourbon, and I will be with it. Can I pack up anything for monseigneur—any box or casket?"

"No," replied Law. "Of all my valuables I shall only take this ring with me. It is worth ten thousand crowns. Luckily, I have eight hundred louis d'or which were

brought me this morning by M. Pomier de Saint-Léger. The money came most opportunely, for at the time I had not ten pistoles in my possession."

"Monseigneur could have had twenty thousand louis d'or, if he chose to call for them. Nay, he can have them yet."

"I thank you, my good friend. I might have been compelled to apply to you, if I had not unexpectedly received this supply from Pomier. It will amply suffice for my present requirements. And now, Thierry, you must leave me. I desire to be alone for a time."

More than an hour elapsed before Law rejoined his family, but he did not leave them again till it was time to repair to the Palais Royal. He then tenderly embraced his wife and daughter, and bade adieu to Belinda and her husband.

XI.

THE DEPARTURE.

THAT night the Opera presented a superb appearance, being filled with an extraordinarily brilliant assemblage. All the court was there. Law, who occupied a conspicuous position in the Regent's box, was an object of general curiosity, as he had not been seen in public for some time. His demeanour was marked by unusual haughtiness, and he glanced around disdainfully at the assemblage. Both the Regent and the Duc de Bourbon showed him great attention, and it was generally thought that he was completely restored to favour.

After the Opera, he proceeded to the palace of the Duc de Bourbon, where he found his carriage waiting for him, with his son and Thierry, and, entering it at once, he drove to Guermande.

Next morning Thierry returned to Paris, but came back at night with the information that Lady Catherine and

her daughter had removed to the palace of the Duc de Bourbon, and that Belinda and her husband had left Paris for London, taking the two Irishmen with them.

Thierry also brought word that four of M. Law's friends and coadjutors had been arrested and sent to the Bastille—namely, M. Bourgeois, treasurer-general of the Bank; M. du Revest, comptroller of the Bank; M. Fénelon, distributor of the notes; and M. Fromaget, a director.

Alarmed by this intelligence, for he felt sure that if arrested he was lost, Law became anxious for immediate departure. He was not long detained. That night the Duc de Bourbon's equerry, M. de Sarrobert, with three confidential servants, arrived with the duke's travelling carriage. The equerry brought a purse of gold from the duke, but Law declined it, and bidding farewell to the faithful Thierry, entered the carriage with his son. He was attended by the duke's servants, but M. de Sarrobert returned to Paris.

No interruption occurred to Law till he reached Valenciennes, when he was arrested by the intendant of Maubeuge, who was no other than the son of his old enemy, D'Argenson. After a long and most vexatious detention, he was allowed to proceed to Brussels.

As soon as the arrival of the illustrious fugitive became known in that city, he was waited upon by General Wrangel, the governor, by the Marquis Pancallier, and many other important personages. A grand entertainment was given to him by the Marquis de Prie, and when he visited the theatre a vast concourse of persons assembled to behold him.

At Brussels, Law was overtaken by the envoy of the Czar Ivan Alexiovitz, who presented him with despatches from his imperial master, praying him to take the direction of the finances. But this Law declined, and adhering to his arrangements, proceeded to Venice, where he was eventually joined by Lady Catherine and his daughter.

At first, his flight was disbelieved in Paris, but as

soon as the fact was certified, this satirical piece appeared:

La chose ainsi, je monte en ma calèche,
Ça faisons dépêche;
Adieu vos écus!
Messieurs, n'y pensez plus;

Le sort m'étant favorable et propice,
Je les porte en Suisse.
Qui les reverra
Plus fin que moi sera.

Vous que l'on vit aux actions avides,
Les croyant solides,
Toujours en papier
Vouloir réaliser,

Servez vous donc de vos billets de banque;
Si l'argnet vous manque,
Cherchez le payeur
Pour avoir leur valeur.

Scarcely had the ex-minister quitted France than his possessions were sequestered by the government, under the pretext that he owed twenty millions to the Compagnie des Indes; whereas the contrary was the fact, the Company being largely indebted to him. But he could obtain no redress. He addressed several letters to the Regent, but without effect. In a letter which he sent to the Duc de Bourbon, who professed great anxiety to serve him, occurs this touching appeal: "Æsop was a model of disinterestedness. Nevertheless, the courtiers accused him of having treasures in a coffer, which he often visited. On examination, an old dress which he had worn before entering the prince's service was the only thing found. Had I but preserved my old dress, I would not change places with the wealthiest in the kingdom. But I am naked. They expect me to subsist without goods, and pay my debts without funds."

Law's System has been variously judged, but its faults have been more dwelt upon than its merits, and in the misery occasioned by its downfal, the unquestionable benefits it conferred have been forgotten. "In appre-

ciating Law's theories," says M. Levasseur, "it must be borne in mind that he was the first to reduce into system Economical ideas. He lighted the way, and we can now, judging him and his principles with less passion than his contemporaries judged him, aver that if he was too absolute in his ideas, and too violent in his measures, he was at least animated by the desire to do good, firm in principles which he believed true, and honest in his conduct. He was useful to the science of Economy, and would have rendered great service to commerce if a prudent reserve had kept him within narrower limits."

"The conception of Law," says M. Gambier, in the "Encyclopédie de Droit," "in spite of its original errors, which rendered success impossible, in spite of the blind temerity and grave mistakes which rendered its fall so sudden and terrible, nevertheless attests in its author, in addition to a powerful and inventive genius, a distinct perception of three of the most fertile, though then unknown, sources of the greatness of nations—Maritime Commerce, Credit, and the Spirit of Association."

Financial measures infinitely more reprehensible than the System, and liable to be productive of consequences quite as disastrous, are conducted in our own day on the other side of the Atlantic; and before long we may see "greenbacks" become as worthless as Law's discredited Mississippi paper.

L'Envoy.

Our biographical romance, for such it may be termed, properly ends with Law's flight from Paris, and disappearance from public life. The rest of his history may be briefly told, since it was unmarked by any striking event. His latter days, indeed, offer a melancholy contrast to the dazzling brilliancy of his mid-career. He did not survive his disgrace many years.

While at Venice, he met Cardinal Alberoni, the exiled Spanish minister, and the Chevalier de Saint-George came from Rome to see him. The three remarkable personages had a long conference together at the convent of the Capucines.

From Venice, Law proceeded to Copenhagen, whence he sailed to England in the flag-ship of Admiral Sir John Norris, the commander of the Baltic fleet, and on arriving in London he was presented by the admiral to his Majesty King George I., and very graciously received by that monarch.

During his sojourn in London, Law fixed his abode in Conduit-street, and was visited by many persons of distinction, but his limited means compelled him to live in perfect privacy, and among the few admitted to his intimacy were Charles Carrington and Belinda. His humbler friends were not forgotten, and Terry and Pat, who had resumed their old occupation, were constantly at his door with their chair.

Sir Robert Walpole, who was very well disposed towards the fallen French minister, interested himself greatly to procure his recal by the Regent, but without effect. Failing to obtain the restitution of the property of which he had been so unjustly deprived by the French government, and finding London too expensive for him, Law at last returned to Venice, where he passed the remainder of his days.

His son, who did not survive him more than five years, died unmarried, but his daughter espoused her cousin, Viscount Wallingford.

During his retreat at Venice, Law was visited by Montesquieu, who describes him "as still the same man, his mind always occupied with projects, his head always full of calculations. Although his fortune was slender, he played constantly, and for considerable sums." Even at play he was not so lucky as heretofore, and was sometimes obliged by heavy losses to leave the sole relic of his fortunes, his valuable diamond ring, in pledge.

He died on the 21st of March, 1729, aged fifty-eight, and was buried at Venice.

His epitaph, written in Paris by a ruined Mississippian, ran thus:

Ci-gît cet Ecossais célèbre,
Ce calculateur sans égal,
Qui, par les règles de l'algèbre,
A mis la France à l'hôpital

THE END.

M.K.H. 9-10-41

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